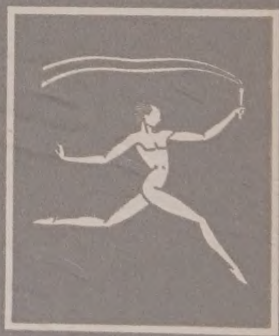
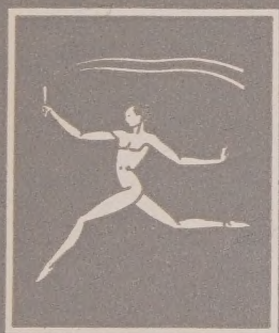


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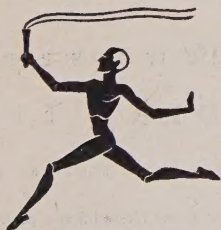
THE BEST STORIES
OF
GUY DE MAUPASSANT

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THE BEST STORIES
OF
GUY DE
MAUPASSANT

TRANSLATED BY

MICHAEL MONAHAN



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To
MME. MURIEL CIOLKOWSKA
WHO WRITING IN FRANCE HAS SERVED
AND ILLUSTRATED TWO LITERATURES.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	i
LOVE	I
OUR LETTERS	9
FOR SALE	17
THE FARMER	25
THE CHRISTENING	35
CLOCHETTE	42
THE POSSESSED	49
THE LITTLE CASK	57
HIS WEDDING NIGHT	65
THE ADOPTION	72
THE WOLF	82
THE CHAIR-MENDER	90
MOONLIGHT	99
THE MINUET	107
A VENDETTA	114
MOTHER SAUVAGE	121
A FISHING PARTY	132
A TRAGEDY OF THE WAR	142

	PAGE
APPARITION	148
FEAR	158
JULIE ROMAIN	167
A WOMAN'S HAIR	177
ROSE	186
THE PRISONER OF MONACO	194
A LEGEND OF MOUNT ST. MICHAEL	199
HAPPINESS	205
A PIECE OF STRING	213
MADemoisELLE FIFI	7
THE PIECE OF STRING	23
BOULE DE SUIF	32
TWO LITTLE SOLDIERS	83
FATHER MILON	91
MONSIEUR PARENT	99
USELESS BEAUTY	135
THE FALSE GEMS	158
THE HORLA	167
A SALE	199
THE STORY OF A FARM GIRL	207
SIMON'S PAPA	230
A COWARD	242

INTRODUCTION

To mention the short story is to name de Maupassant:—in France where this fascinating form of literary art originated and where it has long been cultivated with success, his primacy is undisputed.

French critics distinguish the Maupassant *conte* of fifteen hundred words or so from the *nouvelle*, or more extended short story. The former is regarded as Maupassant's special achievement—in the words of Marcel Prévost, his "most personal, most definitive and most excellent work." Indeed, M. Prévost declares that the Maupassant *conte*—brief, realistic, picturesque—is without literary ancestors in France; so that in form and compass no less than in the inner stigmata of the work, it may be regarded as originating with the "disciple" of Flaubert. *

The stories brought together in this volume are but a small portion of de Maupassant's work, yet it is hoped that they will give the general reader a fairer notion of his art than at present obtains among that very large public to whom French is a sealed book, and who have had access to him only in crude and disfiguring translations.

* According to the eminent critic cited, Maupassant as a *conteur* still stands without a rival in the favor of the French reading public; there is no second to him, and death has but given him a larger and more widely diffused audience.

As an artist Guy de Maupassant has the highest claims to our respect, and we must combat the still too prevalent English depreciation of him as a mere literary sensualist or writer of "suggestive" stories—a kind of false fame which has shut him out from the knowledge of many lovers of literature. Whatever we may think of his choice of subjects or his manner of treating them, and however much we may deprecate the Gallic license in this province, we shall not be able to dispute his literary pre-eminence. For example, we are always comparing the adjective "great," as between Mr. Kipling and some one else, usually to someone else's disparagement. Well, Maupassant was nearly always a finer artist than Kipling, though his view of life was neither so inclusive nor so wholesome as the Englishman's. It must in truth be admitted that, literary ethics apart, the body of Maupassant's work is marked by a ruthless freedom of treatment and an ignoring of conventional reserves and restrictions which have unduly prejudiced it with English readers. This, however, does not impair its value as a human document, or as a piece of consummate artistry. And, in the last analysis, the question of art is allowed to be superior to the questions raised by moral squeamishness.

Few English writers have satisfied the demands of the artistic conscience as rigorously as did Maupassant. It may be worth while to recall briefly the guiding rules of his fine art for the benefit of those who regard good writing as an easeful occupation. In the preface to *Pierre et Jean*, written at the height of his powers, he says: "After so many masters of nature so varied, of genius so manifold, what remains to do, which has not been done, what

remains to say, which has not been said? Who can boast, among us, of having written a page, a phrase, which is not already, almost the same, to be found elsewhere?" Now the man who seeks only to amuse his public, continues Maupassant, by means already known and familiar, writes with confidence, his work being intended for the ignorant and idle crowd. But—and here is a truth, oh ye professors of literature!—those upon whom weigh heavily all the past cycles of literature, those whom nothing satisfies, whom everything disgusts, because they still dream of the unattainable, to whom everything seems already deflowered, whose work gives them always the impression of a labor useless and common—*they* arrive at length to judge the literary art as a thing unseizable and mysterious, which even the greatest masters have scarcely unveiled. What remains then, he asks, for us who are simply conscientious and persevering workers? Why, we can maintain our struggle against invincible discouragement only by continuous effort—*par la continuité de l'effort*.

Let the young English aspirant read the story of Maupassant's seven years' apprenticeship to Flaubert—it will be worth more to him than the learned lucubrations of Dr. Dryasdust or even his sedulous imitation of Bennett and Galsworthy. "I know not," said the master to his disciple, at their first meeting, "whether you have talent. What you have shown me proves a certain intelligence. But do not forget, young man, that genius, according to Buffon, is only a long patience." From the author of *Madame Bovary*, Maupassant derived the chief canon of

his artistic faith and practice, which may profitably be set down here:

“Whatever may be the thing one wishes to say, there is only one phrase to express it, only one verb to animate it, and only one adjective to qualify it. One must seek until one finds *this phrase, this verb and this adjective*; and one must never be content with less, never have recourse to even happy frauds (*supercheries*) or buffooneries of language, in order to avoid the difficulty.”

The literal observance of this rule served the disciple as well as it had served the master—(there are critics who regard Maupassant, in no small portion of his work, as the greater artist). It gave him an almost unique distinction in an epoch and a nation peculiarly fertile in great writers. He was, and is, the unchallenged master of the *conte* or short story. In English we have no one to compare with him, except Edgar Allan Poe and Rudyard Kipling, both of whom he outclasses by virtue of pure artistry. From time to time we hear of some new writer dubbed as the English Maupassant, the Russian Maupassant, even the American Maupassant (!), etc., in accordance with a foolish custom of lazy or incompetent critics. *

It is to be observed that the label never sticks: the artist who (as Henry James said) found short cuts in the night, has nothing to fear from those who would borrow his name. He has had many imitators in all countries,

* Schnitzler is often dubbed the German or Austrian Maupassant, with very doubtful appositeness. Our own O. Henry was called the American Maupassant—to his keen resentment, it would seem, as he could not read the Frenchman's works in the original.

and the strongest men in fiction since his day have been glad to sit at the feet of Flaubert's pupil; but his peculiar achievement remains at its best unique and unapproachable. Maupassant's trick of telling a story in which the dynamic effect is infallibly calculated, like a marksman who can always be counted on to ring the bull's-eye—the stern preparedness with which he sets about his work, brushing away unessentials with that powerful gesture of his—the literal transcription of life, as it seems, which is yet the selective miracle of art—that style so sternly simple, so incomparably terse, yet vibrant with personality like a stretched bow in the wind—that faculty, in which he is still unrivaled, of adequately presenting a passion or a tragedy within a dozen pages—that dolorous though morbid sympathy with the miseries of life, which remains like an unhealed wound with the reader when Hugo's sentimentalism is forgotten—that for the most part unjoyous mirth of the humorist who never laughs—these are the stigmata of the Frenchman's talent which one fails to recognize appreciably in the work of his rivals and successors. Not one of them has touched upon the heart of his secret—that remains, in its full potency, a thing which will not be seen again. Further, it must be allowed that the Frenchman owes his superiority not merely to the perfection of the phrase, but to the variety of his inventions, and his abnormal power of making the reader partake of his impressions. Poe studiously cultivated the horrible, but in tales of this order he achieved an unquestioned artistic success only in the *Cask of Amontillado*. I should like to see what Maupassant would have done with this story, had it come fresh to his hand. Yet

he has a score of such, if not so dramatic in conception as Poe's masterpiece, certainly less peccable in other artistic respects. *L'Apparition* is the most convincing ghost story ever written; Corsican revenge has never been depicted so briefly and powerfully as in his tale of the old woman's vendetta; *Pierre et Jean* is a triumph of art applied to the psychology of moral guilt. *La Petite Roque* is as terribly distinctive a success—we can easily imagine how Poe's twiddling detective instinct would have spoiled these stories for him; *Allouma* is the last word of a sensualism that is as flagrantly frank as it is splendidly poetical; *L'Héritage*, in its politely suppressed irony and demure analysis of motive, rivals Balzac's veritistic etching of Parisian manners.

But what shall I say of *Bel-Ami*, the perfect pink of cynical scoundrelism, with the profoundly immoral, yet strictly true, lesson of the wicked hero's success? Oh, Sandford and Merton! what a contrast is here to the smug hypocrisy of the British Philistia! The man who wrote this book is surely damned—but if you do not admire it, O percipient reader, you will hardly escape artistic reprobation. Talk of the satire of *Vanity Fair*—a book without a man in it! Look, I pray you, at the victorious *Monsieur Georges Duroy*—pardon! I should say, *Du Roy*—see how this plenary profligate makes his smiling way; conquering and deserting women at every turn; putting always money in his purse; guilty of everything except a blush of shame or a pang of remorse. What “green probationers in mischief” he makes your stock literary villains appear! The fellow is irresistible, too, has such an air that the more women he conquers,

the more pursue him, ladies of approved and matronly virtue as well as *flaneuses* of the *pavé*. How grandly he goes on from success to success, until the church itself puts the capstone on his triumphal career, and *le beau monde* of Paris acclaims his crowning rascality!

If the true victory of the artist be to have made himself unforgettable in his work, then we may well pause at the name of de Maupassant. The copy of life which he has given us is one of unique interest,—terrible, fascinating, yet repellent. No writer moves us to keener curiosity regarding his mental processes or the formative influences which went to the making of his style and talent. For his rare and sinister distinction he paid, as we know, a fearful price—the man sacrificed himself to the artist. This would have appeared to Maupassant a perfectly logical act, involving neither heroism nor madness, since he held to no commandments save those of Art.

The artistic value of that poignant sacrifice, the literary value of that deeply etched transcript of life, remains and will remain. Tolstoy characterizes Maupassant as the most powerful of modern French writers of fiction. There is, by the way, between these two masters, otherwise so strongly contrasted, no slight kinship in point of artistic methods. Maupassant is perhaps the only Frenchman who could conceivably have written *Ivan Ilyitch*, that most pitiless yet authentic study of disease and death. Perhaps, had Maupassant lived to his full maturity—we must not forget that he died a young man—he would have come, like Tolstoy, to see life with a less morbid

Also, it may or may not concern the reader to know that the translations contained in this book were originally made as a "labour of love" and in a spirit of protest against some very bad versions that had appeared in this country, producing a perfectly libellous impression of Maupassant and his art. Further, they were thought out on a strict selective principle, * as exhibiting by carefully chosen examples the best work of this fecund artist in his unchallenged realm of the *conte* or short story. I have purposely drawn upon the more psychological side of Maupassant's art—the soul-stories, as I may call them—as distinguished from the tales of grosser vein in which, toward the end of his career, he too much indulged. Herein he will be found in his highest moods of passion and power, in some of his most fortunate conceptions; and the American reader in especial will be surprised at the delicacy of thought, the depth of spiritual beauty, and the purity of phrase and sentiment marking not a few of these tales of the Norman master.

It may be impertinent in me to avow that the making of this translation—an occasional task spread over a period of ten years—has doubled my own pleasure and satisfaction in the work of Maupassant. True it is that one can only get to know a foreign author by translating him. Without seeking to compliment my own humble efforts as interpreter—which indeed were useless, since all praise justly recurs to the original—I may confide to the indulgent reader, that the English version seemed to grow under my hand with the overpowering charm and seduction of a

* I have passed by certain stories which, whatever their merit, have become staled by frequent use—and abuse—in this country.

new work. It was again the incomparable artist, the master of psychology who delights even while he terrifies, but brought nearer to me through the medium of my mother tongue.

For another reason, lovers of Maupassant will, it is hoped, give kindly welcome to this collection of his masterpieces:—it should go far to correct the vulgar English and American notion of him as a mere pornographer who seasoned his indecent stories with a dash of style. It is true Maupassant often deals with subjects inhibited by our censorship (though perhaps not by our curiosity); but he deals with them always as an artist, viewing them as essential to his transcript of life. A 'translation like the present one that aims to give a faithful reflex of his literary style, and to reveal the scope of his many-sided observation of life, must also justify the artistic motive which dominates his imperishable work.

MICHAEL MONAHAN.

**LOVE AND OTHER
STORIES**

LOVE

I HAVE just read, in a newspaper item, a drama of passion. He killed her, then he killed himself; therefore he loved her. What matter these persons, *He* and *She*?—their love alone matters to me; and it interests me, not because it touches me, or because it astonishes me, or because it makes me think, but because it recalls a memory of my youth, a strange memory of a hunting adventure in which Love appeared to me like a cross in the heaven to the first Christians.

I was born with all the instincts and senses of primitive man, tempered by the reasonings and emotions of a civilized being. I love hunting passionately; and the bleeding bird, the blood on its plumes, the blood on my hands, make my heart almost faint with a sort of rapture.

Toward the end of autumn that year the cold came suddenly, and I was invited by one of my cousins, Karl de Rauville, to hunt wild ducks with him in the marshes at daybreak.

My cousin was a stalwart man of forty years, red-haired and heavily bearded, a country gentleman, amiable half-brute, of a gay character, gifted with that cheerful humor which renders mediocrity agreeable. He lived in a kind of farm-château situated in a large valley through which a river flowed. Woods covered the hills

to the right and to the left—old seigneurial woods where stood some magnificent trees, and where one found the rarest feathered game in all that part of France. One killed eagles there sometimes; and birds of passage—those that scarcely ever visit our densely populated country—stop almost infallibly in those venerable branches, as if they knew or recognized a little forest corner of old times, which had remained there to serve as shelter for them in their brief nocturnal halt.

In the valley there were large meadows watered by trenches and separated by hedges; farther on, the river which up to that point had been made navigable, expanded into a vast marsh. This marsh was the best shooting ground I ever saw; it was my cousin's chief care, and he kept it like a park. Amid the rushes that covered it with their noisy rustling life, narrow passages had been made, through which flat-bottomed boats were poled along silently over the stagnant waters, brushing up against the reeds, causing the swift fish to take refuge among the weeds, and scaring the wild fowl, whose black, pointed heads would disappear suddenly as they dove.

I love the water with a great passion: the sea, although too vast, too disturbing, impossible to possess; the rivers, so beautiful, but which pass on, which flow away, which depart; and, above all, the marshes, wherein palpitates all the unknown life of aquatic things. The marsh is an entire world by itself on the earth, a different world, which has its own life, its sedentary inhabitants, its passing voyagers, its voices and, above all, its mystery. Nothing is more troubling, more fear-inspiring sometimes,

than a morass. Why hovers this fear over the low plains covered with water? Is it the vague rumor of reeds, the strange jack-o'-lanterns, the profound silence which envelops the marsh on calm nights, or perhaps the strange mists which hang over the rushes like clinging death-robcs; or, it may be, the almost imperceptible chopping of the water, so light, so soft, and yet more terrible sometimes than the cannon of men or the artillery of heaven,—that causes the morass to resemble some dream-country, some fearful region hiding a secret impenetrable and dangerous?

No: another thing disengages itself, another mystery more profound and grave, floats in the thick fog, the very mystery of creation, perhaps! For was it not in the stagnant, muddy water, in the heavy humidity of saturated lands, under the heat of the sun, that the first germ of life moved, vibrated, and opened itself to the light? . . .

Toward evening I arrived at my cousin's house. It was freezing hard enough to split the stones.

During the dinner, in the large room where the cupboards, the walls, the ceiling were covered with stuffed birds, with extended wings, or perched upon branches fastened by nails; sparrow-hawks, herons, owls, terceletcs, buzzards, falcons, vultures,—my cousin wearing a seal-skin jacket, himself resembling some strange animal of the frigid zone, explained to me the arrangements which he had made for this very night.

We were to start at half-past three o'clock in the morn-

ing, so as to arrive betimes at the point chosen for our watch. In this place a hut had been constructed of blocks of ice, in order to shelter us a little against the terrible wind which precedes the day,—that wind loaded with frost which tears the flesh like a saw, cuts it like the blade of a knife, stabs it like a poisoned needle, twists it like pincers, and burns it like fire.

My cousin rubbed his hands. "I have never seen such a frost," he said, "we shall have twelve degrees below zero at six o'clock this evening."

After supper I threw myself on my bed and fell asleep in the light of a great fire flaming in the chimney-place.

Three o'clock was striking when they called me. I put on a sheepskin and I found Karl wrapped in bear furs. After swallowing two cups of burning hot coffee, followed by two glasses of fine champagne, we set out, accompanied by a guard and our dogs, Plongeon and Pierrot.

From the first steps outside, I felt myself frozen to the marrow. It was one of those nights when the earth seems dead with cold. The frozen air resists one; no breath agitates it; it is fixed, motionless, it bites, pierces, dries up and kills the trees, the plants, the insects, the little birds that fall from the branches onto the hard earth, and become hard also like the soil under the clutch of the frost.

The moon in its last quarter, inclined side-wise and very pale, seemed dying in the midst of space, and so feeble that it was unable to go away, but remained up there, fixed also, paralyzed by the rigor of the sky. It cast a sad, dry light upon the world—that dying, ghastly

light which it gives each month at the end of its resurrection.

Karl and I were trudging side by side, with shoulders dropped, hands in pocket and gun under arm. Our boots wrapped in woollen leggings to prevent slipping on the ice, made no noise; and I watched the white smoke arising from the breath of our dogs.

Presently we reached the borders of the morass, and we entered one of those alleys of dry reeds which penetrated this low forest. Brushing aside the long, ribbon-like leaves, we left behind us a light noise, and I felt myself seized, as I had never been before by the strange and powerful emotion which the morass always produces in one. This marsh was dead, dead with the cold—since we were marching upon it—in the midst of its population of withered rushes.

Suddenly, at the turn of the alley, I saw the ice hut which had been built to shelter us. I went inside, and as we had still nearly an hour to await the awakening of the wild birds, I wrapped myself in a blanket in a desperate effort to keep warm. Then, lying on my back, I set myself to watching the deformed moon, which had four horns through the vaguely transparent walls of this polar house.

But the cold of the frozen morasses, the cold of these walls, the cold from the sky, pierced me so terribly that I began to cough.

My cousin Karl was disturbed, "Whether we kill anything or not to-day," he said, "I don't want you to catch cold; we will have a fire here." And he ordered the guard to cut some dry reeds.

A heap of these was made in the middle of the hut, which had a hole at the top to let the smoke out; and when the red flame mounted the height of the crystal walls, they began to melt softly, as if these stones of ice were sweating. Karl who had remained outside, cried to me, "Come and see this!" I stepped out and stood transfixed with wonder. Our cabin, shaped like a cone, seemed a monstrous diamond with a heart of fire, which had suddenly arisen from the frozen water of the marsh. And within we saw two fantastic forms—those of our dogs, warming themselves.

But a strange cry, a loud cry, a wandering cry, passed over our heads. The light of our fire was awakening the wild birds.

Nothing moves me like this first clamor of life which one does not see, and which runs in the sombre air, so fast, so far, before the first light of the winter day appears at the horizon. I fancy, at this frozen hour of dawn, that this fugitive cry carried by the wings of a bird, may be a sigh from the soul of the world!

Karl said, "Put out the fire. It is the dawn."

Indeed the sky was turning gray and bands of ducks in rapid flight passed across the firmament.

A light suddenly blazed in the darkness; Karl had fired, and the dogs leaped forward.

Then from minute to minute,—now he and now I,—we aimed quickly as soon as the shadow of the birds appeared above the reeds. Pierrot and Plongeon, breathless and joyous, brought us the bleeding birds, whose eyes sometimes regarded us in dying.

The day had fully arisen, the sky was clear and blue; the sun was rising at the bottom of the valley, and we were thinking of returning home when two birds, with neck straight and wings stretched in flight, passed suddenly over our heads. I fired. One of them fell almost at my feet. It was a teal with a silver-white belly. Then, in the space above me, a voice, the voice of a bird, cried. It was a short plaint, repeated, heart-rending; and the little surviving bird began to turn in the blue heaven above us, while watching his dead mate which I held in my hands.

Karl on one knee, with eye blazing and gun leveled, sighted for the bird; waiting until it should be near enough.

"You have killed the female," he said, "the male will not go away."

Certainly he was not going away; he was turning always and moaning about us. Never has a lament of suffering torn my heart like the desolate cry, the lamentable reproach of that poor bird lost in space.

Sometimes he flew away under the menace of the gun which followed his flight; he seemed ready to continue his route all alone across the sky. But unable to decide, he returned presently to seek his mate.

"Leave it on the ground," said Karl, "he will come near soon."

He approached, indeed, careless of danger, wild with his love, the love of an animal for the other animal that I had killed.

Karl fired: it was as if some one had cut the cord which

held the bird suspended. I saw something black descending: I heard something fall in the reeds. And Pierrot brought him to me.

I put them both, cold already, in the same ~~game-~~bag . . . and I started that very day for Paris.

OUR LETTERS

EIGHT hours on the railroad determine sleep for some and insomnia for others. As for myself, every journey prevents me from sleeping, the night following.

I arrived toward nine o'clock at the house of my friends the Muret d'Artus family, purposing to spend three weeks at their country place called Abelle. It is a pretty house, built toward the end of the Eighteenth Century by one of their great-grandfathers and kept ever since in the family. It has, therefore, that intimate character of houses which have always been occupied, inhabited, verified as it were, by the same people. Nothing changes there; nothing evaporates from the soul of the abode, never unfurnished, whose tapestries have never been unfastened, and which have become worn, faded and discolored on the same walls. Of the ancient furniture nothing goes away or is discarded; only it is disturbed from time to time to make room for a new piece, which enters there like a new-born child in the midst of brothers and sisters.

The house is on a hill in the midst of a park that slopes down to the river, crossed here by a stone bridge. Beyond the water, meadows extend where are to be seen fat, slow-footed cows nourished with moist grass, whose humid eyes seem full of dews and mists and the freshness

of pastures. I love this place as one loves what one passionately desires to possess. I return here every year in the autumn with an infinite pleasure. I leave it with regret.

After I had dined in this friendly family, so calm and peaceful, where I was received as a relative, I asked of my comrade, Paul Muret:

“What room have you given me this year?”

“Aunt Rose’s.”

An hour later Madame Muret d’Artus, followed by her three children,—two tall misses and a scapegrace of a boy,—installed me in this chamber of Aunt Rose’s, where I had not yet slept.

When I was left alone I examined the walls, the pieces of furniture, all the physiognomy of the apartment, in order to make my mind at home there. I knew it, but very slightly, having entered it several times and also cast an indifferent glance at a portrait in pastel of Aunt Rose, after whom the room had been named.

She told me nothing at all, this old Aunt Rose, in her curl-papers, almost effaced behind the glass. She had the air of a good woman of the past, a woman of principles and precepts, as strong upon maxims of morality as upon cooking recipes,—in short, one of those old aunts who scare away gayety and who are the morose and wrinkled angels of provincial families.

I had not heard anything about her, besides; I knew nothing of her life or of her death. Did she date from this century or the preceding one? Had she quitted this earth after an existence tame or agitated? Had she

yielded back to Heaven the pure soul of an old maid. the calm soul of a wife, the tender soul of a mother, or a soul disturbed by love? What mattered it to me? Nothing; only this name, "Aunt Rose," seemed to me ridiculous, common, pitiful.

I took up a candle in order to scrutinize her severe visage, hung high in an old gilded frame. Then, finding it insignificant, disagreeable, antipathetic even, I turned to examine the furniture of the room. It dated entirely from the end of Louis XVI's reign, from the Revolution and the Directory.

Nothing, not a chair, not a curtain, had penetrated since that epoch into this chamber, which exhaled the souvenir, the subtle odor,—odor of wood, of textures, of chairs, of tapestries, in certain rooms where hearts have lived and loved and suffered.

Then I went to bed, but I could not sleep. After an hour or two of restlessness, I decided to get up and write some letters.

I opened a little mahogany secretary or cabinet with copper rods, placed between the two windows, hoping to find in it paper and ink. But I found nothing in it save a pen-holder much worn, made of a porcupine quill, and a little bitten at the end. I was going to shut up the desk again when a shining point caught my eye: it was a sort of yellow pin-head making a little projection in the corner of a drawer. I scratched it with my finger and it seemed to move. I seized it between two finger nails and drew on it as hard as I could. It came away very softly—a long gold pin, slipped and hidden in a corner of the old cabinet.

Why was it hidden there? I thought immediately that it must have served to move a spring which concealed a secret drawer; and I sought for this spring. It was a long search. After at least two hours of investigation I discovered another hole almost opposite to the first, but at the end of a groove. I buried my pin in this; a little door leaped in my face, and I saw two packets of letters, —old, yellow letters, tied with a blue ribbon.

I read them. And I copy two of them here:

“You wish me then to return your letters, my dear love. Well, here they are, but your request has caused me great pain. What are you afraid of? That I should lose them? But they are all under lock and key. That somebody might steal them? But I watch over them constantly, for they are my dearest treasure.

“Yes, to return them has caused me extreme pain. I asked myself if you had not at the bottom of your heart some regret. Not, indeed, regret for having loved me, for I know that you love me always, but regret for having expressed on blank paper this living love in hours when your heart confided itself, not to me, but to the pen which you held in your hand. When we love there rises in us a need of confession, a tender need of speaking or writing; and we speak and we write. The spoken words fly away, the sweet words made of music, of air and of tenderness, warm, light, evaporated as soon as said, which remain in the memory alone, but which we cannot see or touch or kiss, like the words written by your hand. Your letters? Oh, I return them to you. But what a grief it is!

"Certainly you must have had, on reflection, some delicate self-reproach for words ineffaceable. You have regretted in your sensitive, fearful soul upon which the lightest shadow seizes, having so written to a man whom you loved. You have recalled some phrases which disturbed your memory, and you have said to yourself, 'I shall make ashes of those words!'

"Well, be content—be at peace. Here are your letters. I love you."

"MY DEAR ONE:

"No, you have not understood, you have not divined my intent. I do not regret, I shall never regret having told you my love. I shall write to you always, but you shall return me all my letters as soon as received and read.

"I shall shock you very much, my love, if I tell you the reason of this demand. It is not poetical, as you were thinking, but practical. I am afraid—not of you, assuredly, but of chance. I am guilty. I do not wish that my fault may reach others than myself.

"Understand me well. We may die, you or I. You may die by a fall from your horse, for you ride every day; you may die from an assault, from a duel, from heart-disease, from a carriage accident, in a thousand ways; for if there is only one death, there are more fashions of receiving it than we have days to live. Then, your sister, your brother and your sister-in-law, would not they find my letters?

"Do you believe that they love me? I don't much believe it. And then, even if they adored me, is it possible

that two women and a man knowing a secret—and such a secret—would keep it?

“I seem to be saying a villainous thing in speaking first of your death, and then in suspecting the discretion of your family.

“But we shall all die, one day or another, shall we not? And it is almost certain that one of us will precede the other to the grave. Then surely it is necessary to foresee all dangers, even that.

“As for myself, I shall keep your letters beside mine, in the secret drawer of my little cabinet. I shall show them to you in their silken hiding place, sleeping side by side, full of our love, like lovers in a tomb.

“You are going to say to me: ‘But if you should die first, my dear, your husband would find them—our letters!’

“Oh, I am not in the least afraid. First, he does not know the secret of my cabinet; then, he will not seek it. And even should he find it after my death, still I fear nothing.

“Have you ever thought of all the love-letters found in the drawers of the dead? For myself, I have long thought of them, and it is my reflections thereupon which have decided me to reclaim my letters from you.

“Remember that never—mark me well!—*never* does a woman burn, tear or otherwise destroy the letters which tell her that she is loved. All our life is there, all our hope, all our expectation, all our dreams. These little papers which bear our name and caress us with sweet things, are as relics in a chapel-shrine; and we adore chapels, we women, especially those in which we are the

saints. Our titles of love, these are our titles of beauty, our titles of grace and fascination, our intimate woman's pride; these are the treasures of our heart. No, no!—never does a woman destroy these secret and delicious archives of her life.

"But we shall die, like all the world, and then . . . then, these letters, they find them! Who finds them? The husband. Then what does he do? Nothing, he burns them: that's all.

"Oh, I have thought very much about this; very much. Think that every day women die who have been loved; that every day the traces, the proofs of their fault fall into the hands of their husbands; and yet never a scandal breaks out, never a duel takes place.

"Think, my dear, what man is, or rather the heart of man. You avenge yourself for a living woman; you fight with the man who has dishonored you, you kill him, so long as she lives, because . . . yes, because?—I do not know why exactly. But if you find, after her death, some similar proofs of her fault, you burn them, and you say nothing, and you continue friends with the lover of the dead; and you are well satisfied that these letters did not fall into strange hands and in knowing that they are destroyed.

"Oh! don't I know among my friends some men who must have burned such proofs, and who feigned to know nothing, but who would have fought with blind rage and fury had they found them while *she* still lived. But she is dead! Honor is no longer touched. The grave is the limit of wifely misconduct.

"Therefore, I may keep our letters, which in *you*

hands would be a menace to us both. Dare you say that I am not right?

"I love you and I kiss your hair.

"ROSE."

I had raised my eyes to the portrait of Aunt Rose, and I scrutinized her severe face, wrinkled, demurely masked; and I thought of all those souls of women whom we do not really know, whom we suppose to be so different from what they really are, whose native, simple cunning and tranquil duplicity we never penetrate. And de Vigny's line came suddenly back to my memory—

"Always this companion whose heart is not sure!"

FOR SALE

To start on foot when the sun rises, and to march in the dew along the fields, beside the calm sea, what exhilaration!

A sort of joyous intoxication seems to enter your whole being, through your eyes with the brightness, through your nostrils with the light air, through your skin with the breaths of wind.

Why do we preserve so clear, so fond, so sharp a memory of certain moments of love with the Earth,—the memory of a sensation delicious and rapid like the caress of a landscape disclosed by the turn of a road, at the entrance of a valley, from the bank of a river, as if one should meet a beautiful and complaisant girl?

I remember one day among others. I was going along beside the Breton ocean toward the cape of Finistère. I was going on, without thinking of anything, at a rapid gait beside the waves. It was in the neighborhood of Quimperlé, in that region the sweetest and loveliest of Brittany. A morning of springtime, one of those mornings which rejuvenate you by twenty years, renew your hopes and restore to you the dreams of adolescence.

I was going, by a road scarcely marked, between the wheat fields and the sea. One smelled indeed the sweet smell of the ripe fields and the sharp odor of the sea-

weed. I was going straight ahead without thinking of anything, continuing my journey begun fifteen days before, a tour of Brittany by the coasts. I felt myself strong, agile, happy and gay. I was going. . . .

And I began to dream of delicious things, as all young people dream, in a fashion puerile and charming. How swiftly it flies, this age of reverie, the single happy age of existence! Never are you solitary, never are you sad, never morose or desolate, since you carry in yourself the divine faculty of losing yourself in hopes, as soon as you are alone. What a fairy land where everything comes to pass, in the hallucination of your wandering thought! How beautiful is life under the golden illusion of dreams!

I began to dream. Of what? Of all that one expects constantly, of all that one desires,—of fortune, glory, woman. And all the time I was going with rapid steps, caressing with my hand the yellow spears of wheat, which bent under my fingers and tickled my flesh as if I had touched hairs.

I skirted a little promontory, and I saw on the narrow coast a white house built upon three terraces which descended to the strand.

Why did the sight of this house make me start with joy? How can I tell? Often in traveling thus you find some out-of-the-way corners of the country which you seem to have known a long time, so familiar are they to you, and so much they please your heart. Is it possible that one may never have seen them before?—that one may not have lived there formerly? Everything se-

duces you, enchants you, the sweet line of the horizon, the disposition of the trees, the color of the sand.

Oh, the pretty house upon its high terraces! Some large fruit trees had grown along these terraces, which descended toward the water like giant steps. And each one carried on its top, like a crown of gold, a long bouquet of Spanish broom in flower!

I stopped, seized with love for this abode. How I should have loved to possess it, to live there, always!

I approached the gate, my heart beating with desire, and I saw on one of the pillars of the barrier a large inscription, "FOR SALE." I experienced from this a pleasurable shock, as if some one had offered, had given me the house! Why? . . . Yes, why?—I cannot answer.

"For Sale." Then it hardly belonged to some one, it might belong to any one, to me, to me! Why this joy, this sensation of gaiety profound, inexplicable? Notwithstanding, I knew very well that I could not purchase it—how could I have paid for it? No matter, it was for sale! The bird in the cage belongs to its master, the bird in the air is mine, not belonging to any other.

And I entered the garden. Oh! the charming garden with its estrades placed the one above the other, its espaliers with long arms like crucified martyrs, its tufts of golden broom, and two old fig trees at the end of each terrace.

When I was upon the last I looked toward the horizon. The little coast stretched to my feet, round and sandy, separated from the deep water by three great black rocks, which closed the entrance and broke the waves on days of heavy sea.

On the promontory in front were two enormous stones, one standing upright, the other prostrate in the grass, a menhir and a dolmen, like two strange spouses petrified by some awful malediction, who seemed always to regard the little house whose building they had witnessed—they who had known this solitary bay during ages!—the little house which they would yet see collapse, crumble to pieces, fly away, disappear,—the little house “For Sale.”

Oh, old dolmen and old menhir, how I love you!

And I rang at the door as I would have done at my own house. A woman came to admit me, a little old woman dressed in black and wearing a white cap, who resembled a nun. It seemed to me that I knew this woman, also.

I said to her, “You are not a Bretonne, are you?”

She answered, “No, Monsieur, I am from Lorraine.” She added, “Do you come to see the house?”

“Eh!—yes, of course.”

And I entered. I recognized everything, it seemed to me,—the walls, the furniture. I was almost astonished at not finding my canes in the vestibule.

I passed into the parlor, a pretty parlor carpeted with mats, and which overlooked the sea through three large windows. On the chimney-piece were some Chinese statuettes and a large photograph of a woman. I went toward it at once, persuaded that I should recognize her, also. And I *did* recognize her, although certain that I had never met her. It was she, herself, she whom I was expecting, whom I was desiring, whom I was calling, whose face was then haunting my dreams. She, she whom one

seeks always, everywhere, she whom you are going to see in the street presently, whom you are going to meet on the road in the country as soon as you see a red parasol over the wheat; she, who ought to be already arrived at the hotel where I stop in my journey, in the parlor whose door opens before me.

It was she, assuredly, indubitably *She!* I knew her by her eyes which looked straight at me, by her hair dressed in the English manner, by her mouth especially, by that smile which I had anticipated for a long time.

I asked at once, "Who is this woman?"

The servant with the nun's headdress answered drily, "It is Madame."

I resumed, "Is she your mistress?"

She replied with her devout, hard air, "Oh! no, Monsieur."

I sat down and I said, "Now, tell me all about it."

She remained stupefied, motionless, silent.

I insisted, "She is the proprietress of this house, then?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur."

"To whom, then, does this house belong?"

"To my master, Monsieur Tournelle."

I pointed a finger at the portrait. "And this woman, what is she?"

"It is Madame."

"Your master's wife?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur."

"His mistress, then?"

The nun did not answer. I rejoined, bitten by a vague jealousy, a confused anger against this man who had found this woman:

"Where are they now?"

The servant murmured, "Monsieur is in Paris, but as for Madame, I do not know."

I started: "Ah! then they are no longer together."

"No, Monsieur."

I was cunning, and in a grave voice went on: "Tell me what happened, I shall perhaps be able to render your master a service. I know this woman—she is a wicked creature!"

The old servant scrutinized me and before my open, frank air took confidence.

"Oh! sir, she made my master very unhappy. He met her in Italy and brought her back with him, as if he had married her. She sang very well. He loved her, Monsieur, so that it was pitiful to see him. They made a journey in this country last year, and they found this house which had been built by a fool, a true madman, in order to install himself at a distance of six miles from the village. Madame wished to buy it at once, in order to remain here with my master. And so he purchased it, just to give her pleasure. They stayed here all last summer, Monsieur, and nearly all the winter. And then one morning at breakfast time, Monsieur calls me: 'Césarine, has Madame returned?' 'No, Monsieur.'

"We waited all the day. My master was like a madman. We sought everywhere. We did not find her. She was gone, Monsieur, we never learned where or how."

Oh, what joy invaded me! I wished to embrace the nun, to take her by the waist and make her dance in the parlor! Ah! she was gone, she had escaped, she had left

him, fatigued and disgusted with him. How happy I was!

The old servant resumed: "My master almost died of vexation and sorrow, and he returned to Paris, leaving me with my husband to sell the house. We are asking twenty thousand francs for it."

But I heard no more! I was thinking of *Her*! And all at once it seemed to me that I had only to continue my journey, in order to find her; that she ought to return to the country this spring to see the house, her pretty house which she would have loved so much without *him*.

I threw ten francs into the old woman's hands, I seized the photograph, and I fled, kissing wildly the sweet face on the card.

I regained the road and took up my march again, still regarding the picture of—*Her*! What joy that she was free, that she had escaped! Certainly I should meet her to-day or to-morrow, this week or the following one, since she had quitted him. She had left him because my hour was come!

She was free, somewhere in the world. I had only to find her, since now I knew her.

And always I caressed the bending heads of the ripe wheat, I drank the marine air, which swelled my breast, I felt the sun kiss my face. I was going on—I was going, wild with happiness, drunk with hope. I was going, sure of meeting her presently and of bringing her back to occupy, in *our* turn, the little house "For Sale." How pleased she would be there this time!

Of Maupassant's work as a whole, perhaps the sketches

of peasant life in Normandy are of the greatest value and most enduring interest. There he was brought up and he was not too young when transplanted to Paris. In these Norman stories, some of which follow, his art is seen at its best and his knowledge of life at its surest and fullest. "The Little Cask," like its better known fellow, "A Piece of String," and many another, is a masterpiece in miniature, effectively marking those qualities which have earned for Maupassant the title of king of short story writers. They have also procured for him the singular but apt characterization of "the humorist who never laughs."

M. M.

THE FARMER

THE Baron du Treilles had said to me: "Would you like to come and open the hunting season with me in my farm of Marinville? You would delight me, my dear fellow. Besides, I am all alone. This hunting ground is of access so difficult and the house itself so primitive that I dare bring there only my most intimate friends."

I had accepted.

We started then on Saturday by railroad for Normandy. At the station of Alvimare we got off and the Baron René, showing me a country carryall to which was harnessed a skittish horse driven by a tall, white-haired peasant said: "Behold our coach, my friend!"

The man reached a hand to his landlord, and the Baron pressed it warmly, saying:

"Well, Maître Lebrument, how goes it?"

"Always the same, M'sieu le Baron."

We mounted into this poultry cage suspended and shaken over two enormous wheels. The young horse after shying violently, started at a gallop, throwing us into the air like packages; each return upon the wooden seat made me horribly sick.

The peasant kept repeating in his calm, monotonous voice: "There, there, go slow, Moutard, go slow." But Moutard gave little heed to him and gamboled like a goat.

Our two dogs behind us, in the empty part of the cage, were standing up and sniffing the air of the plains, which betrayed odors of game.

The Baron contemplated in the distance, with pensive eye, the wide Norman country, undulating and melancholy, like an immense English park, a boundless park, where the farmyards, surrounded with two or four rows of trees and full of dwarf apple trees that hide the houses, outline as far as eye can reach, that perspective of woods and thickets which artistic gardeners aim at in tracing the limits of princely estates. And René du Treilles murmured suddenly:

"I love this country; I have my roots here!"

He was a pure-blooded Norman, big and tall, a little paunchy, of that old race of adventurers who went to found kingdoms on the shores of every sea. He was about fifty years old, ten years younger perhaps than the farmer who was conducting us. The latter was a skeleton, a peasant all bones covered with skin without flesh—one of those men who live a century.

After two hours' jolting on the rocky roads across this green and monotonous plain, the wagon entered one of those yards with apple trees and stopped before an ancient dilapidated building; here an old woman servant was waiting, with a young lad who seized the horse.

We entered the house. The kitchen, black with smoke, was lofty and vast. The copper vessels and crockery shone in reflections from the great hearth. A cat slept on a chair; a dog slept under the table. One smelled inside there milk, apples, smoke, and that indescribable odor of old peasant houses; odor of the earthen floor, of the

walls, of the furniture, odor of old spilled soups, of old washings and of old inhabitants, odor of beasts and of persons mingled, of things and of beings; odor of time, of time passed.

I went out again to look at the yard. It was very large, full of old apple trees, squat and twisted and covered with fruits, which were falling into the grass around them. In this yard the Norman perfume of apples was as strong as that of orange trees on Southern shores.

Four lines of beeches surrounded this enclosure. They were so tall that they seemed to reach the clouds in this hour of falling night, and their heads, through which the evening wind passed, were shaken wildly as they chanted a sad and endless plaint.

I returned. The Baron was warming his feet and hearing his farmer tell of the things of the country. He was relating the marriages, the births, the deaths, then the fall in the price of wheat and the news of the cattle. La Veularde (a cow purchased at Veules) had had her calf in mid-June. The cider had not been famous the last year. The apricot trees continued to disappear from the country.

Then we dined. It was a good country dinner, simple and abundant, long and tranquil. And during the meal I was reminded of the particular sort of friendly familiarity which had struck me at first between the Baron and the peasant.

Outside the trees continued to moan under the gusts of night wind, and our two dogs, shut up in the stable, cried and howled in a terrible way. The fire was dying in the

great chimney. The woman servant had gone to bed. Maître Lebrument said in his turn:

"If you permit me, M'sieu le Baron, I will go to bed. I am not in the habit of staying up late."

The Baron gave him his hand and said, "Go, my friend," in a tone so cordial that I could not forbear asking as soon as the man had disappeared: "This farmer is very devoted to you?"

"Better than that, my dear fellow, it is a drama, an old drama entirely simple and very sad which attracts me to him. Here is the story. . . .

"You know my father was a Colonel of cavalry. He had had as orderly this garçon, to-day an old man, son of a farmer. Then, when my father resigned from the army, he took into his service this soldier who was about forty years old. I was thirty. We lived then in our château of Valrenne, near Caudebec-en-Caux.

"At that time my mother had a chamber-maid who was one of the prettiest girls you ever saw; blonde, vivacious, lively, slender, a true soubrette,—the ancient soubrette now disappeared. To-day these creatures go to the bad at once. Paris, by means of the railroads, attracts them, lures them, seizes them as soon as they mature, those hearty lasses who in old days remained simple servants. Every man that passes, like the recruiting sergeant formerly seeking conscripts, samples and debauches them, and as maids now we have only the refuse of the female race, all that is coarse, repulsive, common and deformed, too ugly for gallantry.

"Well, this girl was charming and I kissed her some-

times in dark corners. Nothing more—oh! nothing more, I swear. She was virtuous, besides; and I respected my mother's house, which your scapegraces to-day are not much in the habit of doing.

“Now it happened that my father's valet, the former trooper and the old farmer whom you have just seen, fell madly in love with this girl. At first we noticed that he was forgetting everything—that he was continually wool-gathering. My father would often say to him:

“‘Come now, Jean, what's the matter with you? Are you sick?’

“He would answer: ‘No, no, M'sieu le Baron, there is nothing the matter with me.’

“He grew thin; then he broke glasses while serving at table and dropped plates. We thought he was suffering from a nervous ailment, and we called in the doctor, who believed there were symptoms of spinal disease. Then my father, full of solicitude for his old servant, decided to send him to a hospital. Hearing this, the man confessed.

“He chose one morning while his master was shaving, and in a timid voice:

“‘M'sieu le Baron . . .’

“‘My garçon . . .’

“‘What I need, you see, is not medicine . . .’

“‘Ah! What then?’

“‘It is marriage!’

“My father, astonished, turned round.

“‘You say . . . You say? . . . What?’

“‘It's marriage I need.’

“‘Marriage. You are then, you are then . . . in love . . . animal?’

“‘That’s just it, M’sieu le Baron.’ My father laughed so immoderately that my mother cried through the wall: ‘What is the matter with you, Gontran?’

“He answered, ‘Come here, Catherine.’ And when she had entered, he related to her, his eyes full of mirthful tears, how his imbecile of a valet had become stupidly sick from love.

“Instead of laughing, Mamma was compassionate.

“‘Who is it that you love so much, my garçon?’

“He declared, without hesitation, ‘It is Louise, Madame la Baronne.’

“Mamma rejoined gravely: ‘Well, we must try to arrange all that for the best.’

“Louise was then called and questioned by my mother; and she answered that she knew very well of Jean’s flame, that he had declared himself several times, but that she didn’t want him. She refused to say why.

“Two months passed during which time father and mother constantly pressed her to marry Jean. As she swore that she loved no one else, she was unable to give any serious reason for her refusal. Father at last overcame her resistance with a fat purse of money; and they were established as farmers on the land where we are to-day. They left the château and I saw no more of them during three years. At the end of three years I learned that Louise had died of consumption. But my father and my mother died in their turn, and I was two years more without seeing Jean.

“Finally, one autumn toward the end of October, the idea came to me of hunting on this property, which had been carefully preserved and which my farmer asserted to be full of game.

"I arrived then one night in this house—a night of rain. I was astounded to find my father's ancient orderly with snow-white hair, since he could not have been more than forty-five or forty-six years old.

"I made him dine with me, sitting at this table where we now are. It was raining in torrents. One heard the water strike the roof, the walls and the windows, and pour a perfect deluge in the yard. My dog howled in the stable as do ours to-night.

"Abruptly, after the woman servant had gone to bed, the man murmured:

"'M'sieu le Baron . . .'

"'Well, Maître Jean?'

"'I have something to tell you.'

"'Say on, Maître Jean.'

"'It is . . . ah . . . ah . . . that it bothers me.'

"'Tell it, nevertheless.'

"'You remember Louise, my wife?'

"'Surely I remember her.'

"'Well, she charged me to tell you a thing.'

"'What thing?'

"'A . . . a . . . as you might say, a confession.'

"'Ah . . . what then?'

"'I . . . I . . . should like better not to tell you, all the same . . . but I must . . . I must. Well, it was not of the chest that she died . . . it was of grief . . . there it is out at last and ended.

"'As soon as she came here she fell away and changed so you would not have known her, at the end of six months, not have known her, M'sieu le Baron. It was all as before marrying her, only different, entirely different.

" 'I had the doctor come. He said she had a disease of the liver. Then I bought some drugs, drugs, drugs, more than three hundred francs' worth. But she did not wish to take them. She said: "It's not worth the trouble, my poor Jean; 'twill all be for nothing."

" 'I saw, indeed, that there was some hidden sickness at bottom. And then I found her weeping often. I knew not what to do, no, I knew not what to do. I bought her dresses, bonnets, pomade for her hair, earrings. Nothing was of any use. And I understood that she was going to die.

" 'Now one night toward the end of November, a snowy night, when she had not left her bed during the day, she told me to go for a priest. I went for him.

" 'As soon as he had come:

" 'Jean,' she said, 'I am going to make you my confession. I owe it to you. Listen, Jean. I have never deceived you, never. Neither before nor after marriage, never. Monsieur le Curé is here to tell it, he who knows my soul. Well, listen, Jean, if I die, it is because I have not been able to console myself for leaving the château . . . because I had too much . . . too much friendship for M'sieu le Baron René. Too much friendship, you understand, nothing but friendship. That is killing me. When I could see him no more I felt that I was dying. If I had seen him I would have lived; only seen him, nothing more. I want you to tell him this one day, later, when I shall be gone. You will tell him? Swear it . . . swear it, Jean, before the priest. It will console me to know that he will know some day that I died of that. There! . . . swear it.'

" 'I promised, M'sieu le Baron. And I have kept my word with the faith of an honest man.'

"And he was silent again, his eyes fixed on mine.

"Cristi! my dear fellow, you have no idea of the emotion that seized me on hearing this poor devil, whose wife I had killed without suspecting it, relate me such a story on such a night of storm, in this kitchen.

"I stammered: 'My poor Jean! my poor Jean!'

"He murmured: 'It is all over with now, M'sieu le Baron. We can do nothing, neither the one or the other. It is ended.'

"I took his hand across the table and I began to weep.

"He asked: 'Do you wish to see her grave?'

"I bowed assent, not caring to speak more.

"He rose, lighted a lantern, and behold us going through the rain; our lantern showing fitfully the oblique drops, rapid as arrows.

"He opened a gate and I saw some black wooden crosses. He said suddenly, 'There it is,' pointing to a slab of marble lying upon a tomb, and placed his lantern upon it in order that I might be able to read the inscription.

To Louise Hortense Marinet,

Wife of Jean François Lebrument, farmer,

She was a Faithful Wife. May God Rest Her Soul.

"We were on our knees in the mud, he and I, with the lantern between us; and I watched the rain strike the white marble, rebounding in a watery spray, then flow over the four sides of the cold, impenetrable stone. And

I thought of the heart of her who lay dead there. . . .
Oh, poor heart! . . . poor heart!

“Since then I return here every year. And I know not why, but I feel troubled like a culprit before this man, who has always the air of forgiving me.”

THE CHRISTENING

BEFORE the farm gate the men waited, dressed in their Sunday best. The May sun poured its clear light on the blossoming apple trees, round like immense white, red and perfumed bouquets, and which covered the whole yard as if with a roof of flowers. There fell constantly from them a snow of small petals which flew about and kept whirling until they were lost in the deep grass, where the dandelions burned like flames and the wild poppies seemed drops of blood.

A sow with enormous belly and distended udders lay asleep on the side of a dungheap, while a litter of little pigs played around her, with their tails twisted like a cord.

Suddenly, down there behind the farm trees, a church bell tinkled. Its iron voice cast into the joyous heaven a feeble and distant call. A flight of swallows passed like arrows across the blue space enclosed by the lofty, motionless beeches. An odor of the stable came sometimes, mingled with the sweet and sugared breath of the apple trees.

One of the men standing at the gate turned toward the house and cried: "Come on, come on, Melina; don't you hear the bell?"

He was perhaps thirty years old, a tall peasant whom

the hard labor of the fields had not yet bent or deformed. His father, an old man, knotty as an oak, with twisted legs and knobby wrists, observed, "The women are never ready,—at first!"

The old man's other two sons began to laugh, and one, turning to the eldest brother who had called first, said to him: "Go after them, Polyte—they will not come before noon."

And the young man went into the house.

A band of ducks, which had halted near some peasants, raised a quacking, while flapping their wings; then they started toward the pond with their slow and balanced gait.

Now, at the door which had remained open, a stout woman appeared, carrying a two-months'-old child. The white strings of her tall bonnet hung down her back and fell upon a red shawl, blazing like a fire; the infant, wrapped in white linen, reposed upon her prominent stomach.

Then the mother came, tall and strong, fresh and smiling, hardly nineteen years old, holding her husband's arm. Followed the two grandmothers, withered like old apples, with evident fatigue in their jaded loins so long twisted by rude and patient labor. One of them was a widow; she took the arm of the grandfather who had stayed at the gate, and they started at the head of the procession, behind the child and the midwife. The rest of the family followed, the youngest carrying paper bags filled with candies and sugar plums.

Down there the little bell rang incessantly, calling with

all its strength the frail mite whom the church awaited. Some boys climbed upon the hedges; some people appeared at the fences; some farm-girls stopped between two buckets of milk, which they set on the ground in order to gape at the baptismal party.

The nurse, triumphant, carried her living burden, avoiding the pools of water in the hollow road between the slopes planted with trees. And the old people came with ceremony, marching a bit zigzag on account of their age and aches; and the younger ones wished to dance and stared at the girls who came to see them pass; and the father and mother walked gravely, more serious, following this child who would replace them later in life, who would continue their name in the country—the name of Dentu, a name well known to the canton.

They turned into the plain and went across the fields, in order to avoid the long way round by the road. Now they saw the church with its pointed steeple. An opening pierced it just under the slate roof, and something was moving in there, going and coming with a quick movement, passing and repassing behind the narrow window. It was the bell that kept ringing always, crying to the new-born to come, for the first time, into the house of the good God.

A dog started to follow them; the children tossed him some sugar-plums, and he frolicked about the procession.

The church door stood open. The priest, a tall young man, with red hair, thin and strong—a Dentu also, uncle of the babe and brother of its father—waited before the altar. And he baptized, according to the rites of the

church, his nephew Prosper Cæsar, who began to cry as soon as he had tasted the symbolic salt.

When the ceremony was ended the family stood about the church door while the priest removed his vestments; then they started for home. They went quickly now, for they were thinking of dinner. All the brats of the country followed, and each time the youngsters flung bonbons among them, there was a terrible row, hand-to-hand battles, faces punched and hair torn out. Even the dog threw himself into the struggle in order to get his share of the sweets; pulled by the tail, by the ears, and by the paws, he was fully as obstinate as the gamins.

The nurse, a little tired, said to the priest who was marching near her: "Father, would you mind holding your nephew a bit while I limber myself a little? I have a cramp in the stomach."

The priest took the child, whose white robe made a great bright stain on his black soutane, and he embraced him, though uneasy with his light bundle, not knowing how to hold it or to place it. Everybody started to laugh. One of the grandmothers called from the rear of the procession, "Say, Father, you are not grieving, are you, because you will never have anything like that?" . . .

The priest made no reply. He was going with great strides, staring fixedly into the blue eyes of the child, whose round cheeks he wished to kiss. Yielding to the desire, he raised the child to his face and kissed him long and lingeringly.

The father cried: "Say, Father, if you want one like that, you have only to say it, you know." And they began to joke as do the people of the fields.

As soon as they were seated at table the heavy rustic gayety burst like a storm. The two other sons were soon to be married, and their fiancées were present, having come only for the dinner. The guests kept up a running fire of allusions to all the future generations which these marriages promised. There were gross words, strongly spiced, which made the blushing girls titter and caused the men to double in two with mirth; they pounded on the table with their fists, yelling and choking with enjoyment. The father and grandfather were unwearied at this sort of pleasantry. The mother smiled; the old women took their part of the fun and also contributed some broad jests.

Accustomed to this coarse peasant humor, the priest sat quietly beside the nurse, teasing his nephew's little mouth with his finger, in order to make him laugh. He seemed surprised at the sight of this child, as if he had never seen another. He considered him with a reflective attention, with a thoughtful gravity, with a tenderness awakened in the depths of his nature, a strange tenderness, singular, lively and a little sad, for this tiny fragile being who was his brother's child.

He heard nothing, he saw nothing, he was simply contemplating the child. He wished to take it upon his knees, for he felt yet on his chest and in his heart the sweet sensation of having carried it a little while ago, on returning from church. He remained deeply disturbed before this embryo man as before an ineffable mystery of which he had never thought; a mystery august and holy, the incarnation of a new soul, the great mystery of the life which is beginning, of the love which awakens, of

the race which continues itself,—of humanity which marches on forever!

The nurse was eating, her face red, her eyes shining; she was annoyed by the little one who kept putting her away from the table.

"Give him to me," said the priest, "I am not hungry."

And he took the child. Then all disappeared around him, everything was effaced, and he sat there with his eyes fixed on this pink, chubby face. Little by little, the warmth of the small body through its wrappings and his soutane, reached his legs, penetrated him with a caress, very light, very sweet, very chaste, a delicious caress which brought tears to his eyes.

The noise of the guests became terrific, and the child, scared by the clamor, began to cry. A voice called, "Say, Father, why don't you nurse him?" And an explosion of laughter shook the room. But the mother rose, took her son and carried him into a neighboring chamber. She returned after a few minutes, saying that he was sleeping tranquilly in his cradle.

And the festivity went on. The meats, the vegetables, the cider and the wine melted into their mouths as if a whirlpool had swallowed them; stomachs swelled, eyes brightened, minds began to wander.

The night was falling when they reached the coffee. During a long time the priest had not been seen, though nobody had remarked his absence.

Finally the young mother got up and went to look at the baby. It was quite dark now. She felt her way into the bedroom, advancing with her arms stretched out, in order not to strike the furniture. But a singular noise

stopped her short, and she retreated in terror, sure that she had heard some one move. She entered the dining hall very pale and trembling, and told of her fright. All the men rose in tumult, drunk and menacing; and the father, with lamp in hand, leaped into the chamber.

The priest, on his knees beside the cradle, was sobbing; his forehead on the pillow where rested the child's head.

CLOCHETTE

How strange they are,—those old memories which haunt you so that you can never get rid of them!

This one is so old, so old that I am quite unable to understand how it has remained so lively and tenacious in my mind. I have since witnessed so many things sinister, disturbing or terrible that it astonishes me that I cannot pass a day, not a single day, without the face of Mother Clochette rising before my eyes, such as I knew her formerly, a long time ago, when I was ten or twelve years old.

She was an old seamstress who came once a week, every Wednesday, to mend the linen at our house. My parents lived in one of those country residences called a *château*, which is simply an antique mansion with gabled roofs, four or five farms being usually grouped around and dependent upon it.

The village,—a large village or burgh,—was less than a mile away, gathered about the church, a structure of red bricks that had become black with time and weather.

So every Wednesday Mother Clochette came between half-past six and seven o'clock in the morning, and at once went upstairs to the linen room where she began her day's work.

She was a tall, thin woman, and bearded,—for she

had beard all over her face, a surprising beard growing in the shape of incredible bunches and curly tufts across her large face, which suggested a gendarme in petticoats. There was hair on her nose, under her nose, on her chin and cheeks; and her eyebrows were of an extravagant length and thickness, all gray, tufted and bristling, having entirely the appearance of a pair of moustaches placed there by mistake.

She limped, not like ordinary cripples, but like a ship at anchor. When she balanced her tall, bony, distorted body upon her good leg, she seemed to gather herself up as if to mount upon an immense wave; then suddenly plunging as if to disappear into an abyss, she sank down to the earth. Her gait gave you an idea of a storm with its strange balancing motion; and her head, always covered with an immense white bonnet whose ribbons floated over her back, seemed to traverse the horizon, from north to south and from south to north, at each of her movements.

I adored Mother Clochette. Immediately on getting up Wednesday mornings, I mounted to the sewing room where I found her already installed at her work, with a little stove under her feet. As soon as I came, she made me take this heater and sit over it, so that I might not catch cold in the large, chilly room, placed under the roof.

She told me stories while darning the linen with her long, hooked, but quick and skilful fingers. Her eyes behind her large magnifying spectacles—for age had weakened her sight—seemed to me enormous, strangely profound, double.

She had, so far as I may recall, the things she told me and which deeply moved my childish heart,—the magnanimous soul of a poor woman. She saw things in a large and simple fashion. She related to me the happenings of the village,—the story of a cow that had escaped from the stable and had been found one morning in front of Prosper Malet's mill, watching the wooden wings go round; or the story of a hen's egg discovered in the church belfry, without anybody understanding what sort of fowl could have come to lay it there; or the story of Jean-Jean Pilas' dog that had brought back from a distance of ten miles from the village, his master's breeches, stolen by a vagabond while drying before the door after a course in the rain. She told me these simple adventures in such a manner that they took in my mind the proportions of unforgettable dramas, of grand and mysterious poems; and the ingenious tales invented by the poets which my mother used to relate to me at night, had not the savor, nor the largeness, nor the power of the old peasant woman's recitals.

Now one Wednesday, when I had been all morning with Mother Clochette, listening to her stories, I wished to go upstairs to the sewing room again in the afternoon, after having been with a servant to gather hazelnuts in the wood behind the farm of Noir-Pré. I recall all that as clearly as the things of yesterday.

On opening the door of the linen room, I saw the old seamstress stretched on the floor beside her chair, lying face down, her arms extended, holding still her needle in one hand and in the other one of my little shirts. One of

her legs, in a blue stocking,—the good one without doubt,—was lengthened under her chair; and the spectacles shone near the wall, having rolled far from her.

I ran screaming downstairs. There was a great hurrying and commotion; and in a few minutes I learned that Mother Clochette was dead!

I should not know how to describe the emotion, deep, poignant, and terrible, which convulsed my childish heart. I crept down to the parlor and went to hide in a dark corner, in an immense old arm-chair, where I got on my knees to weep. I stayed there a long time, no doubt, for the night came.

Suddenly some one entered with a lamp, but did not see me, and I heard my father and mother talking with the doctor, whose voice I recognized.

They had sent for him at once and he was explaining the cause of the accident. I understood nothing of all that. Then he sat down and accepted a glass of liquor, with a biscuit.

He was talking always, and what he said then endures with me and will indeed remain engraved on my soul until the hour of my death! I believe that I can even reproduce absolutely the words he used.

“Ah!” he said, “the poor woman!—she was my first patient in this place. She broke her leg the day of my arrival, and I hadn’t time to wash my hands on getting down from the coach, when they came to seek me in all haste: for it was very grave, very grave.

“She was seventeen years old then, and a very beautiful girl, very beautiful, very beautiful! Would you have believed it? As to her story, I have never told it, and no-

body excepting myself and one other who is not in the country has ever learned it. Now that she is dead, I may be less discreet.

"At that time there came to establish himself in the village a young assistant schoolmaster who had a handsome face and the dashing form of a young military officer. All the girls ran after him, but he pretended to disdain them, having a great fear, besides, of the head of the school, his superior, Father Grabu, who got out of the wrong side of the bed a good many mornings.

"Father Grabu already employed as a seamstress the beautiful Hortense, who has just died in your house, and whom they called later Clochette—after her accident. The assistant master distinguished the beautiful girl with his notice, and she, no doubt, was flattered to be chosen by this haughty conqueror. She loved him, too, and he obtained the favor of a first tête-à-tête with her in the loft over the schoolhouse, at the end of a day's sewing.

"She made a pretence then of going to her home, but instead of descending the stairway on leaving the house, she mounted it and went to hide herself in the hay, in order to await her lover. He joined her there presently, and was beginning to talk sweet to her when the garret-door opened again, and the master of the school appeared. He demanded:

" 'What are you doing up there, Sigisbert?'

"Feeling that he would be caught, the young schoolmaster, panic-stricken, answered stupidly:

" 'I just came up to rest a little on the hay, Monsieur Grabu.'

"The loft was very high, very large and absolutely

dark. Sigisbert pushed the frightened young girl toward the rear, whispering excitedly: 'Go back there; hide yourself! I shall lose my place. Go back—get out of the way—hide yourself!'

"The master, hearing an indistinct murmur, rejoined: 'You are not alone there, then?'

" 'Oh, yes! Monsieur Grabu.'

" 'But you're not, since I hear you speaking.'

" 'I swear to you I am, Monsieur Grabu.'

" 'That is what I am going to find out,' replied the old man, and double-locking the door, he descended to get a candle.

"Then the young man, a coward of rare quality, lost his head and becoming furious, urged the girl repeatedly: 'Go on!—hide yourself, so that he shall not find you. You are going to take the bread out of my mouth for the rest of my life! You are going to destroy my career! . . . Hide yourself, will you?'

"They heard the key again turning in the lock.

"Hortense ran to the window which gave upon the street, opened it quickly and then said in a low and resolute voice: 'You will come and pick me up when he is gone!' And she leaped!

"Father Grabu found nobody and redescended, very much perplexed.

"A quarter of an hour later Sigisbert came to my house and told me of the adventure. The young girl had remained at the foot of the wall, incapable of rising, having fallen two stories. I went there to seek her, with the lover. It was raining torrents and I brought to my house this unfortunate, whose right leg was broken in three places,

the bones showing through the flesh. She did not complain, but said only with an admirable resignation! 'I am punished, well punished!'

"I sent for help and also for the girl's parents, for whom I invented the fable of a runaway carriage that had thrown her down and maimed her in front of my door. They believed me, and the police searched vainly during a month for the author of the accident.

"That's all. And I say this woman was a heroine—of the race of those who have accomplished the noblest historic deeds.

"It was her only love. She died a virgin. She was a martyr, a grand soul, of devotion sublime. And if I had not admired her absolutely, I should not have told you her story, which I never wished to tell anyone during her life—you understand why."

The doctor ended. Mamma was weeping. Papa muttered some words that I failed to catch; then they left the room.

And I stayed there on my knees in the old chair, sobbing, while I listened to a strange noise of heavy steps and jarring sounds on the stair.

They were carrying away the body of Clochette.

THE POSSESSED

DOCTOR BONENFANT searched his memory, repeating in a low voice: "A Christmas story? . . . A Christmas story? . . ." And suddenly he cried: "Yes, I have one, and a very strange one at that. It is a fantastic tale, I assure you. I have seen a miracle! Yes, ladies, a miracle, on Christmas night.

"You are astonished to hear me speak thus—me who have little faith in anything. All the same, I have seen a miracle. I have seen it, I say, with my own eyes,—is not that what you call *seen*?

"Was I much surprised at it? No, for I do not believe in your beliefs: I believe in faith, and I know that it can move mountains. I could cite you some examples—but I should bore you, and I should also risk spoiling the effect of my Christmas tale.

"At the outset, I will confess that if I was not strongly convinced and converted by what I saw, I was at least very much moved; and I shall try to tell my story simply, as though I had a peasant's unquestioning faith.

"I was then a county doctor, living in the village of Rolleville, in the midst of Normandy. The winter that year was terrible. With the end of November the snow came, after a week of frost. You saw in the distance heavy clouds coming from the north; and the white fall

of the flakes began. In one night all the country was buried.

"The farmhouses, isolated in their square yards behind their shelter of tall trees powdered with frost, seemed to sleep under the accumulation of thick, light foam. No living thing crossed the motionless country; only the crows in dense companies described long festoons on the sky, vainly seeking their life or sweeping down all together upon the livid fields and picking the snow with their large beaks.

"Nothing was to be heard but the vague and continuous fall of frozen white dust. That lasted eight full days; then the avalanche stopped. The earth had on its back a mantle of snow five feet thick.

"And for three weeks thereafter a sky clear as a blue crystal during the day and at night all sown with stars that might have been of ice, so rigorous was the vast heavenly space stretched above the uniform, hard and shining mantle of snow.

"The plain, the hedges, the sheltered elms, all seemed dead, killed by the cold. Neither man nor beast ventured out: only the cottage chimneys, scarfed with white, revealed the hidden life by their threads of smoke which rose straight in the glacial air.

"From time to time you heard the trees crack as if their branches had broken off under the bark, and sometimes a great limb detached itself and fell, the invincible frost petrifying the sap and severing the fibres. The habitations scattered here and there over the fields, seemed distant a hundred leagues from one another. People lived as they could. Alone, I tried to visit my nearest

patients, exposing myself to a constant risk of being buried in some pitfall.

"I saw presently that a mysterious terror was hovering over the country. Such a scourge, people thought, was not natural. Some pretended that they heard voices in the night,—sharp whistling, passing cries.

"These cries and this whistling came without any doubt from birds of passage that voyage at twilight and fly in great flocks toward the south. But how will you talk reason to infatuated people? A fright took possession of all minds and every one expected some extraordinary event.

"Father Vatinel's forge was situated at the end of the hamlet of Epivent, on the turnpike, now invisible and deserted. Now, as people were running short of bread, the blacksmith decided to go to the village. He stopped some hours chatting at the six houses which form the centre of the community, took his bread and the news, and a little of the fear spread over the country. He started for home before night fell.

"Suddenly, while skirting a hedge, he thought he saw an egg on the snow; yes, an egg deposited there, very white, like all the rest of the world. He bent forward; it was an egg indeed. Where did it come from? What hen could have left her coop and come to lay it in such a place? The blacksmith was astonished and could make nothing of it; but he picked up the egg and carried it home to his wife.

"Look here, mother, an egg that I found on the road."

"The good wife shook her head.

" 'An egg on the road? In this weather! You're drunk, for sure.'

" 'No, no, mistress, it was at the foot of a hedge and still warm, not frozen. I put it under my vest so it shouldn't get cold. Here it is, you shall eat it for your dinner.'

"The egg was slipped into the pot where the soup was simmering, and the blacksmith started in to relate the gossip of the countryside. His wife listened, very pale.

" 'Sure I heard some whistles the other night, but they seemed to come from the chimney.'

"They sat down to table, they ate the soup first, then while the husband was spreading butter on his bread the wife took the egg and examined it with a suspicious eye.

" 'If there was something in this egg?'

" 'What do you think could be in it?'

" 'How should I know?'

" 'Go on then, eat it, and don't be a fool.'

"She broke the shell. It was an ordinary egg and very fresh. She began to eat it slowly, tasting it, putting it down and taking it up again. The husband said: 'Well, how does it taste?'

"She did not reply and she finished swallowing the egg; then suddenly she fixed a haggard, insane look upon her man, raised her arms, was seized with convulsions from head to foot and finally rolled on the ground, uttering horrible cries.

"All night long she struggled in frightful spasms, shaken with awful tremblings, deformed by hideous convulsions. The blacksmith, unable to hold her, was obliged to tie her down.

"She howled incessantly, without rest and with an indefatigable voice: 'I have it in my stomach! I have it in my stomach!'

"I was called next day. I prescribed the usual alleviatives without obtaining the least result. She was mad.

"Then, with incredible rapidity, in spite of the deep snow, the strange rumor ran from farm to farm: 'The blacksmith's wife is possessed!' And people came from everywhere, without daring to enter the house; one heard from afar the woman's frightful cries, uttered in a voice so strong that it did not seem to proceed from a human creature.

"The village curé, a simple old priest, was sent for. He ran in his surplice as if to a dying person, and stretching out his hands, he pronounced the formula of exorcism, while four men held down upon the bed the tortured woman, convulsed and foaming at the mouth.

"But the evil spirit was not chased. And Christmas came without any change in the terrible weather.

"The day before, the priest came to see me. 'I wish,' he said, 'to have this unfortunate creature brought to the midnight Mass. Perhaps God will perform a miracle in her favor in the same hour in which He was born of a woman.'

"I answered: 'I approve absolutely, Monsieur l'Abbé. If her mind should be struck by the ceremony (and nothing could be better calculated to impress her), she may be saved without other remedy.'

"The old priest murmured: 'You are not a believer,

Doctor, but you will help me, will you not? You charge yourself to bring her?’

“And I promised my aid.

“The evening came, then the night, and the church bell began to ring, casting its plaintive voice across the desolate space, upon the white and frozen extent of the snows. Some black objects, the peasants, came slowly, obedient to the summons. The full moon illuminated all the horizon with its wan light, rendering more visible the pale desolation of the fields. I had taken four strong men and with them I went to the forge.

“The possessed was howling always, fastened to her bed. We dressed her, in spite of her desperate resistance, and carried her away.

“The church, lighted and cold, was now full of people; the singers uttered their monotonous chant; the organ rolled; the little altar-bell tinkled, regulating the movements of the faithful. I shut up the woman and her keepers in the presbytery kitchen, awaiting the moment which I deemed favorable.

“I chose the instant which follows the Communion. All the peasants, men and women, had received their God, in order to appease His anger. A great silence hovered while the priest was completing the Divine Mystery.

“On my order the door was opened and my four helpers appeared, carrying the mad woman.

“As soon as she saw the lights, the crowd on their knees, the illuminated choir and the gilded altar, she fought with such fury that she almost escaped from us, and she screamed so terribly that a shudder passed visibly

over the congregation; all heads were raised; some people ran out in sheer fright.

"She had not the appearance of a woman, convulsed and twisted in our hands as she was; her face disfigured, her eyes mad.

"We dragged her to the steps of the altar and there we held her powerfully, half kneeling all of us, on the floor.

"The priest arose; he waited. As soon as he saw that we held her fast, he took in his hands the ostensorium encircled with rays of gold, with the white Host therein, and advancing some steps he raised it in both hands above his head, presenting it to the frightened glances of the demoniac.

"She was howling always, her eye fixed, riveted upon this dazzling object. The priest remained as motionless as a statue.

"And that lasted a long time, a long time.

"The woman seemed to be seized with fear; she contemplated the sacred receptacle fixedly, shaken still with awful but transient convulsions, and crying always, but with a voice less formidable.

"And that lasted a long time, a long time.

"One would have said that she could not lower her eyes, that they were riveted upon the Host; her shrieks died to a moan, her stiffened body weakened, relaxed.

"All the crowd were kneeling, with heads bowed to the floor.

"The possessed now lowered her eyelids rapidly, then raised them soon, as if unable to bear the sight of her God. Her moaning ceased. And then suddenly I saw that her eyes remained closed. She was sleeping the sleep

of the somnambulist, hypnotized . . . pardon! conquered by the persistent contemplation of the vessel with rays of gold; overthrown by the victorious Christ.

"They took her away, motionless, while the priest reascended toward the altar.

"The congregation, swept by a wave of religious emotion, intoned a *Te Deum*.

"And the blacksmith's wife slept forty hours without a break, then awoke without any memory of her possession or her deliverance.

"There's the miracle for you, ladies, as I witnessed it."

Doctor Bonenfant added somewhat gruffly, in the tone of one who finds himself contradicted:

"I was unable to refuse my written testimony to it."

THE LITTLE CASK

MAÎTRE CHICOT, the tavern keeper of Épreville, stopped his tilbury at Mother Magloire's farm. He was a big, hearty fellow of forty, red-faced and paunchy, who passed among his neighbors for being sly and shrewd.

He tied his horse to the gate and entered the yard. He owned some land adjoining the old woman's farm, which property he had long coveted.

A score of times had he tried to purchase it, but Mother Magloire had always obstinately refused to sell. "I was born here and I will die here," she said.

He found her peeling potatoes before her door. Seventy-two years old, she was dry, withered, bent, but as indefatigable as a young girl. Chicot gave her a friendly tap on the back, then sat down near her on a stool.

"Well, Mother, how's the health—always good?"

"Not so bad. And you, Maît' Prosper?"

"Oh, I'm well enough, barring the rheumatism."

"Good—that's no ill news."

She said nothing more. Chicot watched her at work. Her crooked fingers, knotted and hard as a crab's claws, seized like pincers the greyish potatoes in a basket beside her, and quickly she turned them, removing long strips of peel under the blade of an old knife which she held in one hand. When the potato had become all yellow, she threw it into a bucket of water. Three daring

chickens, one after another, ventured to her petticoats to pick up the peelings, and then cluttered away hastily with prey in beak.

Chicot seemed hesitating, anxious, embarrassed, with something at his tongue's end that he found hard to say. Finally he decided.

"Now, look here, Mother Magloire . . ."

"Eh, eh, what is it, at your service?"

"This farm of yours, are you still unwilling to sell it to me?"

"No, no! Don't count on it. That is settled for good, and don't let us bring it up again."

"But listen, I have thought of an arrangement which would suit us both."

"What is it?"

"Here it is. You sell the farm to me, but you keep it just the same. You don't understand? Now follow my plan."

The old woman stopped peeling her potatoes and fixed on the tavern-keeper her quick eyes under their wrinkled lids.

He went on: "I'll make it plain to you. Each month I give you one hundred and fifty francs. Understand this well—each month I bring to you here, in my tilbury, thirty écus of one hundred sous. And nothing else is changed—not the smallest thing. You remain here at home, you don't trouble your head about me, you owe me nothing. All you do is to take my money. Does that suit you?"

He beamed on her with a joyous air, an air of frank good humor.

The old woman considered him distrustfully, seeking the snare in his words. She demanded: "Well, that is for me, you say, but the farm—how does this give it to you?"

He rejoined: "Don't worry about that. You stay here as long as the good God lets you live. You are at home, in your own place. Only you will sign a little paper at the notary's, so that when you pass on, the farm shall become mine. You have no children, only some nephews for whom you don't care a rap. Does it suit you? You keep your property during your life, and I give you thirty écus of one hundred sous per month. It is all to the good for you, isn't it?"

The old woman was surprised, disturbed, and tempted. She replied: "I don't say no, only I want to think about it. Come back next week and we'll talk it over again. I will then give you my answer."

Chicot thereupon went away, happy as a king who has just conquered an empire.

Mother Magloire remained thoughtful. She did not sleep that night. During four days she was in a fever of hesitation and uncertainty. She smelled a rat in Chicot's offer, but the thought of the thirty crowns per month, of this beautiful ringing silver money that would pour into her apron, that would fall upon her, as it were, from the heaven, without need of her doing anything for it,—ravaged her with desire.

Then she went to the notary and stated her case to him. He advised her to accept Chicot's offer, but urged her to demand fifty écus of one hundred sous in place of thirty; her farm being worth, at the very lowest, sixty thousand francs.

"If you should live fifteen years," said the notary, "he will only have paid in this way forty-five thousand francs."

Mother Magloire shivered at this perspective of fifty écus of one hundred sous per month. But she was suspicious always, fearing a thousand unforeseen things, hidden ruses, obscure stratagems; and she remained until night, harassing the notary with questions and unable to bring herself to a decision. At length she ordered him to draw up the paper, and she returned to her house as much confused as if she had drunk four pots of new cider.

When Chicot came for her answer, she fenced with him a long time, declaring that she did not want his bargain, but devoured by fear lest he might not consent to give the fifty pieces of one hundred sous. Finally, as he persisted, she told him what she wanted.

He had a shock of disappointment, and refused. Then, to win him over, she began to reason about her probable length of life.

"I haven't more than five or six years for sure. Here I am seventy-three, and not strong at that. The other night I thought I was going to die. It seemed as though my heart had stopped, and they had to carry me to bed."

But Chicot would not allow himself to be taken. "Go on, old squeeze, you're as solid as the church steeple, and will live to at least a hundred and ten. You will bury me for sure."

The whole day was wasted in discussion. But as the old woman stood firm, the tavern-keeper at last agreed to give the fifty crowns.

They signed the papers next day. And Mother Mag-

loire demanded ten écus for treat money to wet the bargain.

Three years passed. The good woman was carrying herself like a charm. She scarcely seemed a day older, and Chicot was in despair. It seemed to him that he had been paying this rent for fifty years; that he had been deceived, cheated, ruined. He went from time to time to visit the old woman, as one goes in July to the fields to see if the wheat is ripe for the sickle. She received him with a sly malice in her look. You would have said she was congratulating herself upon the clever trick she had played him; and he quickly got into his tilbury again, saying to himself: "Old scarecrow! are you never going to die! . . ."

He knew not what to do. He wished to strangle the old woman each time he saw her. He hated her with a ferocious, cunning hatred, the hatred of a peasant who thinks himself robbed. Then he cast about for means.

One day, finally, he called on her, rubbing his hands as he did the first time when he proposed to bargain. After chatting a few minutes:—

"Look here, Mother Magloire, why don't you come to dine at my house when you pass Épreville? People gossip about it; they say we are not good friends, and that makes me feel bad. You know at my house you pay nothing. I am not stingy about a dinner. So long as the heart bids you. come whenever you please, and I shall be happy."

Mother Magloire needed no urging, and two days after,

as she was going to market in her carriage driven by her farm hand Célestin, she boldly put up her horse at Maître Chicot's stable and claimed the promised dinner.

The tavern-keeper, glowing with smiles of welcome, treated her like a lady, served her bountifully with chicken, sausage, chitterling, leg of lamb, and bacon with cabbage. But she scarcely ate anything; frugal since childhood, having always lived on a little soup and a crust of bread and butter.

Chicot, disappointed, urged her warmly. She drank as little as she ate. She refused to take coffee.

He demanded, "But you will accept a little glass of something good to drink?"

"Oh, as to that, yes. I don't say no."

Then he shouted across the tavern: "Rosalie, bring me 'fine,' the private stock, the best in the house, do you hear?"

The servant appeared, carrying a long bottle ornamented with a paper vine leaf. Chicot filled two small glasses. "Taste that, Mother, it's the pure quill!"

The good woman sipped the liquor very slowly, with little swallows, making the pleasure last. When she had finished her glass, she upturned it and drained the last drop, then said: "Ah, yes, it *is* the fine!"

She hadn't finished speaking when Chicot poured for her a second glass. She wished to refuse, but it was too late; and she tasted it lingeringly like the first.

He wanted to give her a third treat, but she resisted. He insisted:

"Come now, why it's harmless as milk, you see; I drink ten, twelve of them without feeling it. It passes from

you like sugar. Nothing in the belly, nothing in the head—you would say it evaporates on the tongue. Really, there is nothing better for the health."

As she really wanted it, she yielded, but she took only half the glass.

Then Chicot cried in a burst of generosity: "See here, Mother, since you like it so well I'll give you a little cask, just to prove that we are always good friends." The good woman did not say nay to this, and she went away a little drunk.

The following day the tavern-keeper entered Mother Magloire's yard, and drew from the bottom of his carriage a little keg, hooped with iron. Then he wished to make her taste it, in order to prove that it was the same "fine," and when they had each drunk three glasses, he prepared to go, saying:

"And you know when this is gone, there's more where it came from—don't worry about that. I'm not miserly where you're concerned. The sooner it's finished the happier I shall be."

And he drove off.

He returned four days later. The old woman was sitting at her door cutting up bread for soup. He approached, said good day to her, came very close in order to smell her breath, and recognized a whiff of alcohol. Then his face cleared.

"You will offer me a glass of the 'fine,' won't you?" he said.

And they clinked two or three times.

Presently the rumor ran about the country that Mother

Magloire was getting drunk all alone. She was picked up, now in her kitchen, now in her yard, now along the neighboring roads; and she had almost to be carried to her home at times, being inert as a corpse.

Chicot went no more to see her, and when people spoke to him of the peasant woman, he would say with a sad face: "Isn't it unfortunate, at her age, to have formed the habit? You see when one is old, one has no resources. That will end by playing her a bad trick."

It did play her an evil trick, in sooth! She died the following winter, toward Christmas, having fallen drunk in the snow.

And Maître Chicot inherited the farm, saying: "That old fool! Why, if she hadn't soused she would have been good for ten years longer."

HIS WEDDING NIGHT *

(*Farce Normande*)

THE procession advanced, unwinding itself like a ribbon in the hollow road shaded by the great trees that grew along the farm slopes. First came the newly married pair, then their relations, then the guests, then the country poor; finally, the children, who danced about the tail of the column, passed between the ranks, and even climbed the trees in order to get a better view.

The bridegroom, Jean Patu, was a handsome fellow, and the richest farmer of the country. Above all, he was a fanatical sportsman who threw away his good sense in gratifying this passion, and spent more money than he could afford on his dogs and keepers, his ferrets and his guns.

Rosalie Roussel, the bride, had been eagerly courted by all the eligible young men of the neighborhood, for they

* Maupassant's tales of Norman peasant life are the most valuable part of his literary bequest; they are truly "of the soil" and give the complete illusion of reality. It is doubtful if this side of the Frenchman's work has ever been equaled in the vigor and fidelity of the character-drawing and the stern brevity of the style. Most of these stories are of a tragic cast; the following, though in a light vein for Maupassant, is a good example of the *contes Normandes*.

M. M

found her agreeable, and they knew also that she had a rich *dot*. But she had chosen Patu, perhaps because he pleased her better than the others, yet rather more, as a prudent Norman girl, for that he was the richest match.

When they had turned the boundary of the bridegroom's farm, four gun shots rang out, although they could not see the marksmen hidden in the ditches. At this salvo a heavy humor seized the men in the procession, and they laughed awkwardly in their stiff Sunday clothes. Leaving his wife, Patu leaped upon a farm-hand whom he had glimpsed behind a tree, took away the fellow's gun and fired a shot himself; all the time cutting up like a young colt.

Then the procession resumed its course under the apple trees already laden with fruit, through the tall grass and amidst the calves that stared solemnly with their big eyes, rose slowly and remained standing, their heads turned toward the wedding cortège.

On approaching the place of festivity the men became grave again. Some of them, the richer ones, strutted under high hats of shining silk, which seemed out of place in the country. Others sported ancient top-pieces with a long nap, like moleskin; the humblest wore caps.

All the women had shawls loosed at the back and the ends of which they held upon their arms in a ceremonious way. These shawls were flaming red and variegated; and their brightness seemed to astonish the black hens on the dunghill, the ducks at the pond, and the pigeons on the thatched roofs. All the green of the country, the green of the grass and the trees, was aggravated, as it were, by contact with this blazing purple, and the two colors

thus violently brought together became blinding under the noon-day sun.

The great farmhouse seemed to be waiting down there, at the end of a vault of apple trees. A kind of smoke came from the door and the open windows, and a thick odor of eatables was exhaled by the large building from all its openings and from its very walls.

Like a serpent the line of guests lengthened itself in order to cross the court. The first, reaching the house, broke the chain and scattered, while down there they were still entering in due order at the open gate. The ditches were now covered with children and the curious poor. There were constant volleys of gun shots, bursting forth on all sides at once, mingling in the air a smoke of powder with the odor which intoxicates like absinthe.

Before the door the women shook the dust from their dresses and untied the oriflammes which served as ribbons to their hats, undid their shawls and entered the house in order to free themselves of these ornaments.

The table was laid in the great farmhouse kitchen, which was capable of accommodating a hundred people.

They sat down at two o'clock. At nine o'clock they were still eating. The men, unbuttoned, in shirt-sleeves, red-faced from exertion, swallowed like whirlpools. Laughed the yellow cider, joyous, clear and golden in the tall glasses beside the colored wine, of a dark-red hue, the color of blood.

After each dish they made a "hole," the true "Norman hole," with a drink of whiskey which put fire in their bodies and folly in their heads.

From time to time a guest, full as a cask, left the table and went out to the nearest trees; presently came back with a fresh hunger.

The women, scarlet, oppressed, their stays stretched like balloons, cut in two by the corset, swollen above and below, remained at table through pudency. But one of them, having been forced to make a break, all rose and followed her. They returned more joyous, ready to laugh. And the heavy pleasantries commenced. Across the table coarse jokes were exchanged, all bearing on the nuptial night. The arsenal of the peasant mind was emptied. During a hundred years the same obscenities have served for the same occasions, and although everybody knew them, they still carried, moving the two long lines of guests to uproarious laughter.

A gray-haired old man called out: "All aboard, travelers for Mézidon!"—which elicited screams and howls of mirth.

At the far end of the board four young men were plotting some pranks on the bridal pair, and they seemed to have hit upon a choice one from the fervid way they stamped amid their whispered parley.

One of these, suddenly availing himself of a calm moment, cried out:

"The poachers will make a fine haul to-night, with such a moon! I say, Jean, it's not the moon that you'll be watching for, eh?"

The bridegroom turned sharply. "Let the poachers try it on, if they dare."

But the other laughed coarsely. "Ah! they'll come all right; you'll never quit your fun for that!"

The whole table was swept by the roar that followed; the floor trembled and the glasses vibrated in the tempest of mirth.

But the husband became furious at the idea that anybody was going to profit by his wedding in order to poach on his land. And he rejoined grimly: "I say to you only this:—let them try it on!"

Then followed a rain of jokes of double meaning, which caused the bride to blush, all trembling with expectation as she was.

Finally, when all had drunk their fill of whiskey, the company broke up for the night, and the newly wedded pair retired to their chamber, which was on the ground floor, like all the farmhouse bedrooms. As the night was still quite warm, they opened the window and closed the shutter. A small lamp, given by the bride's father, burned on the dresser, and the bed was ready to receive the new couple, who were less ceremonious in their first embraces than the bourgeois of the cities.

Already the young woman had taken down her hair and undressed to her petticoat; she was now unlacing her boots, while Jean, finishing a cigar, watched her from a corner.

He watched her with a shining eye, more sensual than tender, for he desired her more than he loved her; and suddenly, with a brusque movement, like a man who has work to do, he threw off his coat.

She had undone her shoes and now she was withdrawing her stockings; then she said in the familiar tone she had used with him from childhood: "Go and hide

down there behind the curtains until I get into bed."

He made a face as if to refuse; then he did as she bade him, with a crafty air, and hid himself, keeping his head in view, however. She laughed, declared she would blind-fold him, and they played in a gay and amorous fashion, without assumed modesty and without constraint.

To make an end he yielded; then in a second she untied her last petticoat, which fell around her feet and lay in a hoop on the floor. She left it there, leaped out of it, nude under her floating chemise, and slipped into the bed, the springs of which sank under her weight.

At once he arrived, shoeless himself and in pantaloons, and he bent over his wife, seeking her lips, which she was hiding in the pillow, when a gun shot sounded far off, toward the wood of Rapées, it seemed to him. Startled, he rose up with anxious heart and running to the window, flung wide the shutter.

The full moon poured a yellow light over the court; the apple trees cast sombre shadows at their feet; and in the distance the open country shone, covered with ripe harvests.

As Jean leaned outside the window, spying all the rumors of the night, two soft, nude arms came and twined about his neck, and his wife, drawing him backward, murmured: "Let it go—what does it matter?—Come to bed!"

He turned round, seized her, strained her to him, embracing her closely under the thin robe; then, lifting her bodily in his strong arms, he carried her toward their couch. At the very instant he was placing her on the bed, a new detonation, but much nearer this time, resounded.

Then Jean, shaken with a fierce anger, swore: "By God! they believe I won't go-out, on account of you. . . . Wait, wait!" . . . He slipped on his shoes, unhooked his gun that always hung within reach of his hand, and as his wife dragged herself at his knees, desperately imploring him to remain, he freed himself quickly, ran to the window and leaped into the yard.

She waited an hour, two hours, until daylight. Her husband did not return. Then she lost her head, gave the alarm, told of Jean's fury and his chase after the poachers.

At once the farm-hands, the drivers and the lads started out to hunt for the master. They found him two leagues from the house, bound hand and foot to a tree, half-dead with rage, his gun twisted, his breeches on wrong-side, with three killed hares around his neck and a placard on his breast reading—

*"Who goes to the chase
Shall forfeit his place."*

And later, when Jean was relating the adventures of this nuptial night, he would say: "Oh, for a joke, it was a good joke all right! They took me in a snare like a rabbit, the scoundrels, and they covered my head with a sack. But if I get the scent of them one of these days, let them look out!" . . .

Such are the pranks with which the people amuse themselves on wedding days in old Normandy.

THE ADOPTION

(Aux Champs)

SIDE by side stood the two poor cottages, at the foot of a low hill, not far from a little seaside resort. The two peasants labored desperately on the barren land in order to bring up their families, each household having four children. Before the two neighboring doors all the young ones swarmed, played and fought from morning till night. The two eldest were six years old, and the two youngest about fifteen months: the marriages and then the births had taken place almost simultaneously in both households.

Hardly could the two mothers distinguish their own progeny in the heap of brats; and the two fathers were often confounded entirely. The eight names danced in their heads, were constantly mixed up and confused; and when they wanted to call one child, the men often called three names before getting the right one.

The first of the two hovels, as you come from the watering place of Rolleport, was occupied by the Tuvaches, who had three sons and a daughter; the other sheltered the Vallins, who had a son and three daughters.

Both families subsisted poorly and painfully on soup, potatoes, and especially the fresh air. At seven o'clock

each morning, at noon, and at six in the evening, the mothers gathered their young ones for the meal, as the keepers of geese assemble their flock. The children were seated, according to age, before a wooden table varnished by a half-century of use. The last urchin could hardly lift his mouth to the level of the table. Before them was placed a large bowl full of bread softened in water in which the potatoes had been cooked, half a cabbage and three onions; and all the line ate until their hunger was appeased. The mother herself fed the littlest one. A bit of meat in the stew on Sundays was a grand feast for all; and on that day the father would linger long over his dinner, often repeating: "I should like to fare as well every day."

One afternoon in August a light carriage stopped suddenly in front of the two cottages, and a young woman, who was driving, herself, said to the gentleman seated beside her:

"Oh, look, Henri, what a swarm of children! Are they not too sweet like that, playing in the dust?"

The gentleman did not answer, accustomed, no doubt, to these bursts of admiration, which were a grief and almost a reproach to him.

The young woman went on:

"I really must hug them! Oh, how I should love to have one of them—that darling there, the littlest one."

Jumping from the carriage she ran to the children, caught one of the two last, a Tuvache, and, lifting him up in her arms, she kissed the child passionately on his dirty cheeks, on his yellow hair tousled and anointed with

dirt, on his little hands, which he agitated wildly in order to free himself from her annoying caresses.

Then she climbed into her carriage and drove off rapidly. But she came back the following week, sat herself down on the ground, took the brat in her arms, stuffed him with sweetmeats, gave bonbons to all the others, and played with them like a madcap while her husband waited patiently in the carriage.

Again she returned, made acquaintance with the parents, reappeared every day, her pockets loaded with candies and pennies.

She called herself Madame Henri d'Hubières.

One morning, on arriving as usual, the husband got out of the carriage with her; and without stopping among the children, who knew her well now, she went straight into the house of the Tuvaches.

The parents were there, about to split wood and prepare the supper: very much surprised, they straightened up, offered chairs to the strangers, and sat down, waiting to hear the object of this visit. Then the young woman commenced to speak in an agitated, faltering voice:

"My good people, I have come to see you because I would like very much . . . indeed, I would like very much to take away with me your . . . your little boy."

The peasants, stupefied by this proposition, and unable to think at first, from surprise, made no answer.

She regained her breath and continued:

"We have no children; we are alone, my husband and I . . . We would keep the child . . . are you willing to let us have him?"

The peasant woman began to understand. She demanded:

"You want to take our Charlot? Ah, no, for sure, you shall not!"

Then Monsieur d'Hubières, interposed:

"My wife has not explained herself very well. We wish to adopt the child, but he shall return to see you. If he turns out well, as there is every reason to believe he will, he shall be our heir. If, by chance, we should have other children, he would share equally with them. On the other hand, if he should not respond to our cares and expectations, we would settle upon him, at his coming of age, a sum of twenty thousand francs, which will be immediately deposited in his name with a notary. And, as we have also thought of his parents, we agree to pay you during the term of your lives the sum of one hundred francs a month. Do you understand all this clearly?"

The farmer's wife rose in a fury:

"You want us to sell our Charlot? Ah, no!—that is not a thing to ask of a mother, that. I say no!—it would be an abomination."

The man, looking grave and thoughtful, said not a word, but he approved his wife's decision with a continuous nodding of the head.

Madame d'Hubières, in despair, began to weep, and, turning toward her husband, with a voice full of sobs, the voice of a spoiled child whose every desire is gratified, she cried brokenly:

"They are not willing, Henri, they are not willing!"

Then they made a last attempt to win over the peasants.

"But, my friends, think of your child's future, of his happiness, of——"

The peasant woman, exasperated, broke in upon him:

"We see it all, we understand it all, and we have made up our mind. Go away now, and I hope we shall never again see either of you around here. It's a crime to wish to take a child like that!"

Then Madame d'Hubières going out, happened to be-think herself that there were *two* very little urchins, and she asked through her tears, with the persistence of a headstrong, spoiled woman who cannot bear to be denied anything:—

"But the other little fellow is not yours, is he?"

Father Tuvache put in at this:

"No, he belongs to the neighbors; you can go to see them if you like." And he turned back into the house, which resounded with the shrill complaints of his wife.

The Vallins, husband and wife, were at table, about to begin operations on some slices of bread on a plate between them; before eating they rubbed the bread parsimoniously with a very little butter picked at the end of a fork.

Madame d'Hubières again set forth her proposition, but with more address and insinuation this time; also with more cunning and oratorical precaution.

The two rustics at first shook their head in token of denial; but when they learned that they would have a hundred francs each month for themselves, they began to reconsider the matter, consulting each other with fur-

tive looks, very much shaken. They were silent a long time, in a state of painful hesitancy and doubt. Finally the wife demanded:

"Well, what do you say to this, my man?"

He replied in a sententious tone:

"I say it is not to be despised."

Then Madame d'Hubières, who was trembling with anguish and fear of another refusal, spoke of the future of the little one, of his happiness, and of all the money he would be able to give them later on.

The farmer demanded:

"This pension of twelve hundred francs, will it be promised before the notary?"

Madame d'Hubières replied: "Yes, certainly, and it shall begin to-morrow."

The farmer's wife, who had been meditating, here broke in:

"A hundred francs a month is not enough to deprive us of the little one; he would be working in a few years, this child. I say we ought to have fifteen hundred francs."

Madame d'Hubières, who was fidgeting with impatience, granted this demand at once; and as she wished to take the child then and there, she gave a hundred francs to the parents as a gift, while her husband drew up a contract in writing. The mayor and a neighbor were called in at this point, and obligingly acted as witnesses.

At last the young woman, radiant with triumph, carried off the screaming child, as one seizes a passionately desired bibelot at an auction.

The Tuvaches, from their door, witnessed this final

scene of the negotiations; they were silent, severe, perhaps regretting their refusal.

There was no more talk heard about little Jean Vallin. Each month his parents went to draw their hundred and fifty francs at the notary's; and they were angry with their neighbors because Mother Tuvache pursued them with insults, constantly repeating from door to door that folks must be unnatural to sell their child—that it was a horror, a dirty thing, a corruption!

Sometimes she caught up her Charlot in her arms, proudly and defiantly, crying to him as if the child could understand:

"I did not sell *you*, not I; I did not sell *my* little one. I do not sell my children—no, no! I am not rich, but I do not sell my children."

During years and years that followed there were thus every day some insulting allusions vociferated at open door or window so as to reach the neighboring house. Mother Tuvache had finished by believing herself superior in virtue to all the country because she had not sold Charlot. And people, happening to speak of her, would say:

"I know it was a very tempting chance for poor folks, but all the same she acted like a good mother."

She was cited for this heroic virtue throughout the district, and Charlot who was now entering upon his nineteenth year, having been brought up in this idea, which was constantly dinned into him, judged himself better than his comrades because his parents had not sold him!

Meantime the Vallins lived at their ease, thanks to the pension; the unappeasable wrath of the Tuvaches, who had remained poor and miserable, arose from this fact. Their eldest son went away to serve his term as a soldier. The second died; and Charlot was left alone to labor with the old father, in support of his mother and two young sisters. He was just touching twenty-one, when one morning a showy carriage stopped before the two cottages. A young gentleman wearing a gold watch and chain, alighted, giving his hand to an old white-haired lady. The old lady said to him:

"It is there, my child, at the second house."

And as if he found himself at home there, he walked straight into the Vallins' cottage.

The old woman was washing her aprons; the old man, now infirm, was dozing near the hearth. Both looked up at his entrance, and the young man said:

"Good day, Papa; good day, Mamma." They rose up, frightened. The peasant woman, in her emotion, dropped the soap into the water, and she stammered: "Oh, is it you, my child? Is it you, my child?"

He took her in his arms and hugged her, repeating:

"Good day, Mamma." While the old man, all a-tremble, said in the calm tone which he never lost: "Ah, here you are back again, Jean!" As if he had seen the young man a few months before.

When they had made an end of greetings and had fully recognized each other, the parents wished to take their son out at once, in order to show him off amongst the neighbors. Accordingly they conducted him proudly to

the mayor's house, then to the deputy mayor, to the priest and to the schoolmaster.

Charlot, standing in the doorway of his cottage, saw the fortunate prodigal go by. That evening, at the supper table, he said to the old woman:

"You must have been stupid to let those rich people take the Vallins' boy."

His mother replied obstinately:

"We did not wish to sell our child!"

Father Tuvache said nothing. And the son cried out:

"Is it not unfortunate to be sacrificed like that?"

Then the old man exclaimed in an angry tone:

"Are you going to blame us for having kept you?"

The son came back brutally:

"Yes, I blame it to you, because you are only fools. Such parents as you make the misfortune of children. You deserve that I should quit you."

The good woman was weeping in her plate. She moaned all the time while swallowing some spoonfuls of soup, the half of which she spilled:

"But you can kill yourself to bring up your children!"

Then the young man said rudely:

"I would rather not have been born than to be what I am. When I saw that fellow this afternoon, my heart almost stopped. I said to myself: Look what you might be now!"

He rose from his chair.

"See here! I know well that I would do better to go away because if I stay I shall be throwing this thing up to you from morning till night, and making your life mis-

erable. And I'm never going to be able to forgive you, never!"

The old couple said not a word, but listened in grief and stupefaction.

He went on:

"No, the idea of staying here would be too hard. I would far rather go away and seek my living elsewhere."

He opened the door. A noise of voices entered. The Vallins were celebrating with the son who had returned.

Then Charlot, stamping his foot, turned toward his parents, and cried:

"Wretches, I am done with you!"

And he flung away into the night.

THE WOLF

THE old Marquis d'Arville told us the following story toward the end of a St. Hubert's dinner at the château of the Baron des Ravels.

During the day we had brought down a deer. The Marquis was the only one of the guests who took no part in the chase, for he never hunted.

Throughout the grand dinner we had talked of little save the killing of animals. Even the women were interested in bloody and often incredible adventures, while the narrators mimicked the attacks and the combats of men against beasts, raised their arms and cried in thrilling tones.

Monsieur d'Arville spoke well in a certain high-flown, poetical manner, but very effective. He must have often repeated this story, for he told it fluently, never hesitating over words chosen with skill to express an image.

Gentlemen, I have never hunted, nor my father, nor my grandfather, nor my great-grandfather. This last was the son of a man who hunted more than all of you. He died in 1764. I shall tell you how.

He was named Jean, he was married and the father of that child who became my great-grandfather; and he lived with his younger brother François d'Arville at our château in Lorraine, in the heart of the forest.

François d'Arville had remained a bachelor for love of the chase. Both brothers hunted from year's end to year's end without rest, without intermission, without weariness. They loved only that, they understood nothing else, they talked only of that, they lived only for that. They had at heart this terrible, inexorable passion. It was burning them up, being possessed of them absolutely, leaving no room for aught else.

They had given orders that they were not to be disturbed while hunting, for any reason. My great-grandfather was born while his father was chasing a fox, and Jean d'Arville did not interrupt his course, but he swore, "By St. Hubert, the rascal might better have awaited the death!"

His brother François showed himself still more infatuated. On rising, he went at once to see the dogs, then the horses, and then he shot birds around the château until the moment came for starting to hunt bigger game.

They were called in the country, Monsieur the Marquis and Monsieur the Cadet (younger), the nobles of that day not acting like the mushroom aristocrats of our time who wish to establish in titles a descending hierarchy; for the son of a marquis is no more a count nor the son of a viscount a baron, than the son of a general is born colonel. But the wretched vanity of the day finds profit in this arrangement.

I return to my ancestors.

They were, it seems, uncommonly large, bony, hairy, violent and vigorous. The younger, taller still than the elder, had a voice so strong that, according to a legend of which he was proud, all the leaves of the forest trem-

bled when he shouted. And when both swung into the saddle in order to start for the chase, it must have been a grand spectacle to see those two giants bestriding their great horses. . . .

Now toward mid-winter of this year 1764, the cold was excessive, and the wolves became ferocious. They even attacked belated peasants, prowled about houses all night, howled from sunset until dawn, and emptied the stables.

And presently a rumor circulated. People spoke of an immense wolf, gray, almost white, of color, that had eaten two children, torn off a woman's arm, killed half the watch-dogs in the country, and boldly entered farm-yards in order to go sniff under doors. All the peasants swore that they had heard his breathing, which almost put out the candle! And soon a panic ran throughout the entire province. Nobody dared go out after night-fall. The shadows seemed to be haunted by the image of this terrible beast. . . .

The brothers d'Arville resolved to find and kill him, and they invited all the gentlemen of the country to a grand hunt.

It was in vain. To no purpose did they beat the forest and search the thickets: they never encountered him. They killed wolves, but not that one. And each night following the chase, the animal, as if to avenge himself, attacked some traveler or devoured some live-stock, always far from the place where they had sought him.

One night at length he penetrated into the pig-house at the château d'Arville, and ate the two finest of the litter. The two brothers were inflamed with rage, considering

this attack as a bravado of the monster—a direct insult—a defiance. They took their strong bloodhounds, accustomed to hunt the fiercest beasts, and they set out for the chase anew, their hearts swollen with fury.

From dawn until the hour when the ruddy sun descended behind the great leafless trees, they beat the thickets without finding anything.

Furious and disconsolate, finally they were both returning from the fruitless chase, walking their horses along a path bordered with brushwood; and astonished at their skill deceived by this wolf, they were suddenly seized by a kind of mysterious fear.

The elder said: "This beast is not ordinary. You would say that it thinks like a man." The younger replied, "Perhaps we ought to have a bullet blessed by our cousin the Bishop, or get some priest to say the proper words."

Then they were silent again. Jean resumed presently, "Look how red the sun is!—The big wolf is going to do some mischief this night." Hardly were the words out of his mouth when his horse reared, while the animal ridden by François began to kick. A large thicket covered with dead leaves, opened before them, and a colossal beast, all gray, rose and took to flight through the woods.

Both men uttered a kind of joyous groan, and bending down over the necks of their horses, they threw them forward with such an impulse of their bodies, exciting them, dragging them, maddening them with voice, gesture and spur, that the strong riders seemed to carry the heavy animals between their thighs and to raise them as if they were flying.

So they were going at head-long speed, smashing through the thickets, cutting across the ravines, climbing the hills, descending the valleys, and sounding the horn with all the power of their lungs in order to call their people and dogs to the chase.

And behold, suddenly in this desperate pursuit, my ancestor struck his forehead against an enormous branch, splitting his skull; and he fell stiff dead to the ground, while the frightened horse ran away, disappearing in the shadows that enveloped the woods.

The younger d'Arville stopped short, leaped to earth, seized his brother with both arms, and saw that the brains were flowing with the blood from his wound. Then he sat down near the body, took upon his knees the bloody, disfigured head, and waited, while contemplating the impassive face of the elder. Little by little a fear invaded him—a singular fear which he had never felt before, the fear of darkness, the fear of solitude, the fear of the deserted wood, and the fear also of the fantastic wolf that had just killed his brother in order to avenge himself.

The shadows grew thicker; the piercing cold made the trees crack. François arose, shivering, unable to remain there longer, feeling himself ready almost to swoon. He could hear nothing now, neither the voice of the dogs nor the sound of the horns: all was silent around the invisible horizon; and this mournful silence in the freezing night had something terrifying and strange.

He seized in his giant hands the immense corpse of his brother, lifted it up and threw it across the saddle, in order to bring it back to the château. Then he resumed

his march slowly, his mind troubled as if he was drunk; pursued by horrible and surprising images.

Suddenly, in the path on which the night was falling, a great, gray shadow passed. It was the beast! A shock of terror agitated the hunter; something cold, like a drop of water, slipped along his spine, and as does a monk, haunted by the devil, he made a large sign of the cross, distracted at this brusque return of the frightful wanderer. But his glance happened to fall again on the inert form lying before him, and suddenly passing in an instant from fear to anger, he trembled with an uncontrollable rage.

Then he put spurs to his horse and dashed forward in pursuit of the wolf.

He followed him through the copses, the ravines and the forests, traversing woods which he failed to recognize, his eye fixed on the white stain that fled before him in the night now fully fallen upon the earth. His horse also seemed animated with a strength and ardor theretofore unknown. He was galloping with neck stretched on a straight-away course, beating against rocks and trees the head of the dead man thrown across the saddle. The briars tore his hair; the head striking against enormous tree trunks, bespattered them with blood; the dead man's spurs tore the bark from the trees in ribbons.

Suddenly the animal and his pursuer left the forest and rushed into a small valley, as the moon appeared above the hills. This valley was stony, shut in by great rocks, without possible issue; and here the wolf turned at bay.

François then gave a joyous yell, which the echoes repeated like the rolling of thunder, and he leaped from his horse, cutlass in hand.

The beast, with hair erect and back rounded, awaited him, his eyes shining like two stars. But before giving battle, the strong hunter seizing his brother, set him upon a rock, and propping with stones that head which was now only a bloody smudge, he shouted in his ear as if he had spoken to a deaf man, "Look, Jean, look here!" Then he hurled himself upon the monster.

He felt himself strong enough to overthrow a mountain, to break stones with his naked hands. The beast tried to bite him, seeking to tear out his entrails; but François had gripped him by the neck, without even using his weapon, and he was strangling him softly, listening to his breathing as it failed, and to the last beatings of his heart. And he was laughing, madly hilarious, tightening more and more his terrible embrace, crying in a delirium of joy,—“Look, Jean, look!” . . .

All resistance ceased; the body of the wolf became limp. He was dead.

Then François placed upon the saddle the two corpses, one over the other, and he started for home again.

He re-entered the château laughing and weeping like Gargantua at the birth of Pantagruel, uttering cries of triumph and dancing with joy while describing the death of the wolf, and moaning and tearing his beard while telling that of his brother. And often, later, when he recalled this day, he would say with tears in his eyes: “If only that poor Jean could have seen me strangle the beast, he would have died happy, I’m sure! . . .”

My ancestor’s widow inspired in her orphan son a horror of the chase, which was transmitted from father to son unto me.

The Marquis d'Arville ended. Someone asked: "That story is a legend, is it not?"

The narrator answered: "I swear to you that it is true, from beginning to end."

Then a woman said in a sweet, low voice, "Ah, what matters that?—but it is grand to have such passions!"

THE CHAIR-MENDER

It was at the end of a dinner given to celebrate the opening of the hunting season, at the country house of the Marquis de Bertrans. Eleven huntsmen, eight young women and the doctor of the place sat around the large table brilliantly lighted and covered with fruits and flowers.

They began to speak of love, and a lively discussion arose, the eternal discussion as to whether one is able to love truly once or several times. They cited examples of persons having had but one serious passion; they cited other examples of persons having loved often and violently. The men, generally, contended that love, like disease, can strike the same being several times, and strike him hard enough to kill if his desire should be crossed. Although this way of looking at the matter may be just enough, the women, whose opinion was founded on poetry rather than experience, affirmed that love, true love, the great passion, can fall but once upon a mortal; that it is like the thunderbolt, and that a heart touched by it remains forever afterward so ravaged, emptied, burned out, that no other powerful sentiment, no dream even, can germinate there again.

The Marquis, having loved very much, disputed this belief with much force. "I tell you," he said, "that one

can love often with all his strength and with all his soul. You cite to me some people who were killed by love, as a proof of the impossibility of a second passion. I answer you that if they had not stupidly destroyed themselves—which removed from them the possibility of a relapse—they would have been cured; and they would have loved again, and ever again, until their natural death. It is with lovers as with drunkards. Who has drunk will drink—who has loved will love. It is purely an affair of temperament.”

They chose the doctor as arbitrator—an old Parisian during many years resident in the country—and they begged him to give his opinion. But he had none.

“As the Marquis says, it is an affair of temperament. For myself, I have known of a passion which lasted fifty-five years, without a day of respite, and which was ended only by death.”

The Marquise clapped her hands. “Isn’t that beautiful? And what a dream to be loved so! What happiness to live fifty-five years enveloped in this desperate, penetrating affection! How happy he should be, and how he should thank his lucky stars, who found himself adored in such a manner!”

The doctor smiled. “In truth, Madame, you are right on this point—that the beloved person was a man. You know him—it is Monsieur Chouquet, the village pharmacist. As to the woman, you have often seen her—the old chair-mender who used to come every year to the château. But let me tell you the whole story.”

The enthusiasm of the women had suddenly fallen, and their disgusted expression seemed to say “Pugh!”—as if

love were bound to strike only refined and distinguished beings, alone worthy of the interest of such as they, people of wealth and position.

The doctor resumed: "I was called three months ago to the death-bed of this old woman. She had arrived the night before in the sort of covered van which served her as a house, drawn by the old hack that you have seen and accompanied by her two immense black dogs, her friends and guardians. The priest was already with her. She made us her executors and, in order to explain her last wishes, she told us the story of her life. I know nothing more singular and more poignant.

"Her father and mother, like herself, were chair-menders. She had never had a shelter planted in the earth. When very little she wandered, ragged and dirty, with her parents. This was their manner of life: from time to time they stopped at the entrance to a village, alongside the road; the horse browsed, the dog slept on his paws and the little one rolled in the grass, while papa and mamma mended the old chairs of the commune, in the shadow of the elms. They did not talk much in this moving house. After the few words necessary to decide who should make the round of the houses, crying the well known, "Chairs to mend!—Chairs to mend!"—they set themselves to twist and weave the straw, face to face or side by side. When the child was going too far away or was trying to play with some urchin of the village, her father's angry voice recalled her: 'Are you coming back here, brat?' These were the only words of tenderness she ever heard.

"When she had grown larger her parents sent her to

gather worn-out chair bottoms in the villages. Then she sketched some acquaintance from place to place with the gamins, but now it was the parents of her new friends who harshly recalled their children: 'Come straight back here, busybody! How dare you stop there, talking with a ragamuffin?'

"Often the children threw stones at her.

"Some ladies having given her some pennies, she kept them carefully.

"One day—she was then eleven years old—as she was passing through this place she saw young Chouquet behind the cemetery, crying because a playmate had stolen a penny from him. These tears from a little bourgeois—from one of those children whom the poor homeless child in her frail noddle imagined to be always happy and satisfied—fairly overwhelmed her. She went up to him and, finding out the cause of his sorrow, she poured into his hands all her savings, seven sous, which he took naturally while drying his tears. Then, wild with joy, she had the audacity to kiss him. As he was studying his money attentively, he offered no objection. Seeing herself neither repulsed nor beaten, she recommenced; she embraced him to her heart's content. Then she ran away.

"What happened in that miserable head? Did she attach herself to this boy because she had sacrificed to him her little vagabond fortune, or because she had given him her first love-kiss? The mystery of love is the same both for the young and the mature.

"During months she dreamed of this corner of the cemetery and of this gamin. In the hope of seeing him again she robbed her parents, hooking a sou here, a sou there.

on a chair-mending or on provisions that she was sent to buy.

"When she returned she had two francs in her pocket, but she could only see the little pharmacist, very spruce, through the windows of the paternal drug-shop, between a flaring red bottle and a tape worm. She loved him all the more for this, ravished and delighted by the glory of colored water, the splendor of shining crystals.

"She kept an ineffaceable memory of him, and when she met him, the year following, behind the school, playing marbles with his comrades, she flung herself upon him, seized him in her arms and kissed him with such violence that he started to yell with fear. Then, to appease him, she gave him her money, almost four francs this time, a real treasure, which he stared at in wide-eyed wonder. He took it and let her caress him as much as she pleased.

"During four years more she poured into his hands all her savings, which he pocketed with a good conscience, in exchange for kisses endured and granted. It was one time three francs, another time two francs, still another only twelve sous (she wept with sorrow and humiliation, but the year had been bad); and the last time a whole five-franc piece, a big round coin, which made him laugh with pleasure.

"She thought no more but of him, and he awaited her return with a certain impatience, and ran to meet her when he saw her coming, which caused the girl's heart to beat with a strange joy.

"Then he disappeared: they had sent him to college. She learned this by skilful questioning. She began to use

THE CHAIR-MENDER

an infinite diplomacy in order to change her parents' itinerary, so they would pass through here during the vacation. She succeeded, but it took a year of stratagems. She had not then seen him for two years, and she scarcely recognized him, so much had he changed, grown and improved, and so imposing he seemed in his coat with gold buttons. He pretended not to see her and passed proudly by her. She wept during two days, and since that time she suffered constantly.

Every year she returned; passed before him without daring to salute him and without his deigning even to throw a glance on her. She loved him madly. She said to me, 'He is the only man I have seen on earth, doctor; I do not know whether others exist.'

"Her parents died. She continued her trade, but she kept two dogs now instead of one, two terrible dogs that no one would have dared to brave.

"One day while driving through this village where her heart had remained, she saw a young woman leaving Chouquet's shop on the arm of her well-beloved. It was his wife: he was married.

"That very night she threw herself into the pond which is in the City Hall square. A belated drunkard picked her out and carried her to the pharmacy. Young Chouquet came down in a dressing robe to attend her, and, without appearing to recognize her, he removed her saturated clothing, restored her to consciousness and said to her in a hard voice: 'You are mad! How could you do such a stupid thing?'

"That sufficed to cure her. He had spoken to her! She was happy for a long time.

"And all her life thus flowed away. She mended her chairs, thinking of Chouquet. Every year she saw him behind his windows. She bought at his shop small supplies of medicine. Thus she was able to see him and speak to him and still give him some money.

"As I have told you, she died this spring. After having related to me all this sad history, she begged me to deliver to him, whom she had so patiently loved, all the savings of her life; for she had worked only for him, she said, even fasting that she might put something aside and be assured that he would think of her at least once when she was gone. She then gave me two thousand three hundred and twenty-seven francs. I left the twenty-seven francs with the priest for the burial, and I carried away the rest when she had breathed her last sigh.

"The next morning I called on the Chouquets. They were finishing breakfast, sitting opposite each other; fat and red-faced both, important and satisfied, with an odor of drugs about them.

"As soon as he understood that he had been loved by this vagabond, this chair-mender, this roadster, Chouquet bounded with rage as if she had stolen his good name, the esteem of worthy people, his intimate honor, something dearer to him than life. His wife, as exasperated as he, kept repeating, 'That beggar! that beggar!' As if she could find nothing else to say.

"Chouquet rose and strode up and down behind the table, his cap upset over one ear. He exclaimed: 'Do you understand this affair, doctor? It's a horrible thing for a man. But what can I do? Oh, if I had only known it during her life, I would have had her put under lock

and key. And she would have stayed there, I'll guarantee that!'

"I was fairly stupefied at the outcome of my pious proceeding. I knew not what to say or do. But I had to complete my mission. I rejoined. 'She charged me to deliver to you her savings which amount to two thousand three hundred francs. Now since what I have told you seems to be very disagreeable to you, perhaps the best thing would be to give this money to the poor.'

"They stared at me, this worthy couple, stricken with astonishment.

"I took the money from my pocket, the miserable money, of all places and of all denominations, gold and copper mingled. Then I demanded, 'What do you decide?'

"Madame Chouquet first recovered herself: 'But since it was this woman's last wish, it seems to me that it is not easy for us to refuse.'

"The husband, vaguely embarrassed, put in: 'We could buy something with that for our children.'

"I said dryly: 'As you please.'

"He rejoined, 'Give it to us then since you were charged to do so. We shall find means to employ it in some good work.'

"I delivered the money, bowed and took my leave.

"The next day Chouquet called on me and blurted out, without preface, 'She left her wagon here, didn't she, this—this woman? What have you done with the wagon?'

"'Good, take it if you want it'

"'All right; that suits me; I'll make a hen-house out of it for my poultry yard.'

"He was going away: I recalled him. 'She left also her old horse and her two dogs—do you want them?'

"He stopped, surprised. 'Why, no—what do you suppose I could do with them? Dispose of them as you please.' And he laughed. Then he offered me his hand, which I did not refuse. Why should I? In the country the doctor and the pharmacist cannot afford to be enemies.

"I have kept the dogs. The priest took the old horse. The van serves as a hen-house for Chouquet; and he bought five shares of railroad stock with the money.

"That is the single profound love that I have encountered in my life."

The doctor ended. Then the Marquise, with tears in her eyes, exclaimed, "Ah, truly, it is only women who know how to love!"

MOONLIGHT

THE Abbé Marignan bore worthily his martial name. He was a tall, thin priest, fanatical, with a soul always exalted but just. All his beliefs were fixed, with never a doubt or wavering. He imagined sincerely that he knew his God, that he was able to penetrate His designs, His wishes, His intentions.

When he promenaded with great strides in the alley of his little country presbytery, sometimes a question formed itself in his mind: "Why has God done that?" And he sought to know the reason obstinately, taking in his thought the place of God; and almost always he found it. It was not he who would then have murmured in a transport of pious humility, "Lord, Thy designs are impenetrable!" He said to himself, "I am God's servant, I ought to know His reasons for acting and to divine them if I do not know them."

Everything in nature seemed to him created with an absolute and admirable logic: the "Wherefore" and the "Because" always balanced themselves. The dawns were made in order to render joyous the awakenings, the days to ripen the harvests, the rains to water them, the evenings to prepare for slumber, and the somber nights for sleep.

The four seasons corresponded perfectly to all the needs

of agriculture, and never would the slightest suspicion have occurred to the priest that Nature has no intentions and that all that lives has, on the contrary, adapted itself to the hard necessities of epochs, of climates and of matter.

But he hated woman; he hated her unconsciously and he despised her by instinct. Often he repeated the words of Christ: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" And he added, "One would say that God Himself was dissatisfied with this work of His hands!" Woman was indeed to him the child twelve times impure of whom the poet speaks. She was the temptress who had ruined the first man and who continued always her work of destruction; the feeble, dangerous, mysteriously troubling creature. And even more than her body of perdition he hated her loving soul.

Often he had felt the tenderness of woman attached to himself, and although he knew himself unassailable, he became exasperated at this need of loving which trembles always in their hearts.

God, in this good priest's opinion, had created woman only in order to try man and to prove him. One should approach her only with defensive precautions and the fear one has of snares. She was indeed the perfect image of a snare, with her arms extended and her lips open toward man.

He had no indulgence for the sex, excepting only the *religieuses* or nuns whom their vows rendered inoffensive; but he treated even them harshly, because he felt that there was always living there in the recesses of their chained and humiliated hearts that eternal tenderness which awoke even for him, a priest!

He felt it in their glances, more humid with piety than the regards of the monks, in their ecstasies in which their sex mingled itself, in their transports of love for Christ which angered him because it was the love of woman, carnal love. He felt it, this cursed tenderness, in their very docility and obedience, in the softness of their voices whilst speaking to him, in their lowered eyes, and in their resigned tears when he had answered them rudely.

He shook his soutane always on issuing from the convent doors and went away at a rapid gait as if he were fleeing before a danger.

The Abbé Marignan had a niece who lived with her mother in a small house near the presbytery. He was desperately bent on making a Sister of Charity of her.

She was pretty, light-headed and impertinent. When the abbé rebuked her she laughed; and when he grew vexed she embraced him vehemently, pressing him against her heart, while he sought involuntarily to disengage himself from this embrace, which nevertheless caused him to taste a subtle joy, awakening in him that sensation of paternity that sleeps in every man.

Often he talked to her of God, of *his* God, when marching by her side through the field paths. She scarcely heard him the while she looked at the sky, the grass, the flowers, with a sheer happiness of living that mirrored itself in her eyes. Sometimes she darted forward to catch a butterfly and cried on bringing it back in triumph: "Look, uncle, how pretty it is! I would like to kiss it." And this need of "kissing" something, bees or lilac flowers, disturbed, irritated and angered the good priest, who

found in all this the same ineradicable tenderness which germs eternally in the hearts of women.

Now, one day the sexton's wife, who kept house for the priest, informed him, with much precaution, that his niece had a lover. He was terribly shocked, and he stood silent, almost suffocated with emotion; his face covered with soap, for he was in the act of shaving.

When he had somewhat recovered himself and was able to reflect, he cried: "It is not true—you lie, Mélanie!"

The peasant woman placed her hand on her heart: "God is my judge that I do not lie, Monsieur l'Abbé. I tell you she goes to see him every night as soon as your sister is abed. They meet down by the river. You have only to go there between ten o'clock and midnight."

The Abbé Marignan stopped scratching his chin, and he began to march violently to and fro, as he did always in his hours of grave meditation. When he resumed shaving he cut himself three times between nose and ear.

All that day he was silent; swollen with rage and resentment. To his fury as a priest against this invincible love was added the exasperation of a moral father, a guardian, a shepherd of souls, deceived, robbed, tricked by a child—that egotistical resentment of parents to whom their daughter announces that, without them and in spite of them, she has chosen a husband.

After dining the Abbé Marignan tried to read a little, but he was unable to settle his mind to it; and he became more and more exasperated. When ten o'clock struck he took his cane, a formidable oaken cudgel, which he carried always in his nightly walks when he went to see some

sick parishioner. And he smiled as he surveyed the huge club which he twirled in his solid fist with a menacing whirl. Then suddenly he rose, and, grinding his teeth, brought it down on a chair, splitting the back, which fell to the floor.

He opened the door to go out; but he stopped on the threshold, surprised by such a splendor of moonlight as is rarely seen. And as he was endowed with an exalted mind, a mind such as the Fathers of the Church, those poetical dreamers, must have had, he felt himself suddenly distracted, moved by the grand, serene beauty of the pale night.

In his little garden, all bathed with soft light, his fruit trees, ranged in a row, outlined in shadow across the alley their frail limbs scarcely covered with verdure; while the giant honeysuckle climbing up the wall of his house exhaled a delicious and, as it were, sugared aroma, causing to float in the warm, bright night a kind of perfumed soul.

He began to breathe long, deep breaths, drinking the air as drunkards do wine; and presently he walked away at a slow pace, ravished and wondering,—almost forgetting his niece.

As soon as he was in the open country he stopped to contemplate all the plain inundated with this caressing radiance, drowned in this tender and languishing charm of serene nights. Momentarily the frogs uttered through space their short, metallic note, and some distant nightingales mingled their scattered music, which makes one dream without making one think—their music gay and

vibrant, made for kisses, for the seduction of moonlight.

The priest resumed his march, his heart failing him, without his knowing why. He felt himself enfeebled and as it were, suddenly exhausted; he wished to sit down, to remain there, to contemplate, to admire God in His work.

Down there, following the undulations of the little river, a long line of poplars could be traced in serpentine perspective. A fine mist, a white vapor which the moon-rays traversed, silvered and made luminous, hung suspended above and around the trees, enveloping all the tortuous course of the stream with a sort of light and transparent haze.

The Abbé Marignan stopped again, penetrated to the depths of his soul by an increasing, irresistible emotion. And a doubt, a vague disquietude invaded him, while there rose in his mind one of those interrogations which he sometimes proposed to himself.

Why had God made this? Since the night is intended for sleep, for unconsciousness, for repose, for forgetfulness of all, why did He render it more charming than the day, sweeter than the dawns and the evenings? And this slow and seducing star, more poetical than the sun and which seems destined, so discreet is it, to illumine things too delicate and mysterious for the garish light of day—why does it come to make the shadows so transparent?

Why does not the most gifted of singing birds sleep when the others sleep; why does he set himself to sing in the troubling shadow?

Why is this half-veil thrown upon the world? Why those shivers of the heart, this emotion of the soul, this

languishment of the flesh? Why this unfolding of seductions which men do not see, since they are asleep in their beds? For whom was intended this sublime spectacle, this abundance of poesy poured from heaven upon the earth?

The Abbé Marignan did not understand.

But lo! down there, on the border of the prairie, under the vault of trees covered with shining mist, two shadows appeared, marching side by side.

The man was the taller and held the girl embraced about the neck and shoulders; from time to time he kissed her on the forehead. They suddenly animated this motionless landscape, which enveloped them like a divine frame made for them alone. They seemed, these two, like a single being, the being for whom this calm and silent night was destined; and they came towards the priest like a living response—the response which his Master made to his interrogation!

He remained standing, his heart beating rapidly, overwhelmed with emotion; and he believed he saw something biblical, like the love of Ruth and Boaz, the accomplishment of the Lord's will in one of those grand scenes of which the Holy Book tells us. And in his head there began a chanting of the verses of the Song of Songs, the cries of passion, the appeals of the flesh, all the warm poesy of that sublime Poem burning with love.

He said to himself: "Perhaps God has made these nights in order to veil with the ideal the loves of men."

He retreated before this enlaced couple, still marching toward him. It was his niece, notwithstanding; but he asked himself if he had not been on the point of offend-

ing, disobeying God. Does not God permit love, since He surrounds it visibly with such a splendor? . . .

And he fled from the scene, bewildered, almost ashamed, as though he had penetrated into a temple where he had not the right to enter.

THE MINUET

GREAT misfortunes do not sadden me much, said Jean Bridelle, an old bachelor who passed for a skeptic. I have seen war at close hand; I have leaped over dead bodies without emotion or pity. The harsh brutalities of nature or of men can draw from us cries of horror or indignation, but they do not give us that contraction of the heart, that shiver which passes down the spine, at the sight of certain little heart-rending things. The most violent grief we are able to experience, surely, is for a woman the loss of a child, for a man the loss of the mother. That is terrible, crushing, overwhelming; but one recovers from these catastrophes as from large, bleeding wounds. Now certain chance discoveries, certain things half glimpsed, divined, certain secret chagrins, certain perfidies of fate, which move within us a whole dolorous world of thoughts, which suddenly throw ajar before us the mysterious door of moral sufferings, complicated, incurable, the more profound that they seem benign, the keener that they seem almost unseizable, the more tenacious that they seem unreal—these leave in the soul a train of sadness, a taste of bitterness, a sensation of disenchantment, from which we are long in freeing ourselves.

I have always before my eyes two or three things

which others might not have remarked, assuredly, and yet which pierced me like stiletto wounds, deep and incurable.

Perhaps you would not understand the emotion which has remained with me from these rapid impressions. I shall tell you only about one. It is very old, but vivid as of yesterday. Yet it is possible that my sensibility on this score may owe much to my imagination.

I am fifty years old. I was young then and studying law here in Paris. A little sad, a little dreamy, impregnated with a melancholy philosophy, I cared nothing for the noisy cafés, the brawling comrades and the stupid girls. I rose early and one of my dearest pleasures was to promenade alone in the nursery of the Luxembourg.

You have not known this nursery, my friends? It was like a forgotten garden from another age, a garden charming as the sweet smile of an old lady. Tufted hedges separated the narrow and regular alleys, alleys green and calm between two walls of foliage trimmed with exact method. The gardener's huge shears constantly kept these leafy partitions in order; and from place to place you saw parterres of flowers, borders of little shrubs ranged like collegians in promenade, societies of magnificent rose bushes or regiments of fruit trees.

One whole corner of this delightful park was occupied by the bees. Their thatched houses, cunningly spaced on boards, opened to the sun their doors as large as a thimble. And one saw all along the paths the humming, golden bees, true mistresses of this peaceful retreat, true promenaders of these tranquil corridors.

I went there toward eight o'clock almost every morn-

ing. I sat on a bench and read. Sometimes I let the book fall on my lap, in order to dream or to hear Paris living and breathing about me, and to enjoy the infinite repose of these beautiful elms yoked together in the old style.

But I observed presently that I was not alone in frequenting this place from the opening of the gates, for I sometimes encountered face to face, at the turn of a thicket, a strange little old man.

He wore shoes with silver buckles, trousers of antique pattern, a long snuff-colored frock-coat, a piece of lace instead of a cravat, and an outlandish hat with wide brims and long furry nap which made one think of a deluge.

He was extremely thin and meagre, angular, grimacing and smiling. His quick eyes palpitated under a constant agitation of the eyelids; and he carried always a superb gold-headed cane, which looked as if it might be to him a magnificent souvenir.

This good man astonished me at first, then interested me beyond measure. And I watched him through the leafy walls, I followed him at a distance, stopping at a turn of the hedge in order not to be seen.

And behold, one morning when he thought himself safely alone, he started to make some singular movements; some little mincing steps at first, then a curtsy; then he cut a lively caper with his thin leg, then he began to pirouette gallantly, jiggling, bestirring himself in a droll fashion, smiling as if before an audience, bowing, rounding his arms, twisting his poor puppet of a body,

addressing to the vacant air his pitiful and ridiculous salutes. . . . He was dancing!

I stood petrified with astonishment, asking myself which of the two was mad, he or I.

But suddenly he stopped, came forward as do actors on the stage, then bowed low while retiring with gracious smiles and comedian's kisses, which he threw with his trembling hand to the two rows of clipped trees.

And he gravely resumed his promenade.

From that day I never lost sight of him, and each morning he recommenced his incredible exercise.

A wild desire seized me to speak to him. I risked it finally, and having saluted him, said:

"Fine weather to-day, Monsieur."

He bowed. "Yes, Monsieur, it is real old-fashioned weather."

Eight days afterward we were friends and I learned his history. He had been dancing master at the Opera in the time of Louis XV. His beautiful cane was a gift of the Comte de Clermont. And when one spoke to him of dancing there was never an end of his chatter.

Now one day he made me this confidence:

"I married La Castris, Monsieur. I shall present her to you if you wish, but she comes here only in the afternoon. This garden, you see, is our pleasure and our life. It is all that remains to us of the past. It seems to us that we could not live any longer if we did not have it. It is so old and distinguished, is it not? I believe I breathe here an air which has not changed since my youth.

My wife and I, we pass here all our afternoons. But I come every morning, for I am an early riser."

Next day, as soon as I had lunched, I returned to the Luxembourg, and very soon I saw my quaint friend giving his arm with great ceremony to a little old woman dressed in black, to whom he presented me. It was La Castris, the famous dancer, loved by the king, loved by the princes, loved by all that gallant age which seems to have left in the world an odor of love.

We sat down, all three, on a bench. It was in the month of May. A perfume of flowers hovered in the trim alleys; the warm sun-rays stole between the leaves, scattering upon us large drops of light. La Castris's black robe seemed all saturated with brightness.

The garden was quite deserted. We heard the hackney coaches rolling in the distance.

"Will you not explain to me," I said to the old dancing master, "what was the minuet?"

He started. "The minuet, Monsieur!—it was the queen of dances and the dance of queens, do you understand? Since the kings are gone we can no longer have the minuet."

And he commenced, in pompous style, a long, dithyrambic eulogium of which I understood nothing. I wished to make him describe the steps, all the movements, the poses of the dance. He became confused, vexing himself by his failure to satisfy me, and at length broke off, nervous and irritated.

Then suddenly turning toward his old companion, always silent and grave, he said:

"Élise, do you wish—say, do you wish—it would be very sweet of you—to show this gentleman how we used to dance the minuet?"

She cast her unquiet eyes on every side, then rose without saying a word, and came to place herself in front of him.

And then I saw a thing never to be forgotten.

They came and went with infantile grimaces, smiling at each other, balancing to each other, bowing to each other, hopping and skipping like two old dolls made to dance by some mechanical contrivance, a little broken, which might have been constructed in ancient days by a skilful workman, according to the manner of his time.

And I looked at them, my heart troubled with extraordinary sensations, my soul filled with an unspeakable melancholy. It seemed as though I saw a comic yet lamentable apparition, the discarded Shadow of an Age! I wished to laugh and I needed to weep. . . . Suddenly they stopped; they had terminated the figures of the dance. During some seconds they remained standing face to face, grimacing in a surprising fashion; then they fell sobbing into each other's arms.

I started three days afterward for the provinces. I never saw them again. When I returned to Paris two years later, the nursery of the Luxembourg was destroyed. What became of them without their dear garden of the past, with its winding paths, its odor of the old time and the gracious detour of its yoke-elm?

Are they dead? Do they wander through modern streets like exiles without hope? Do they dance, poor

grotesque ghosts, a fantastic minuet, beneath the cypresses of a cemetery, along paths bordered with tombs, in the light of the moon?

The memory of them haunts me, tortures me, persists in me like a wound. Why? I know no more than you.

You will think this ridiculous, no doubt?

A VENDETTA

PAOLO SAVERINI's widow lived alone with her son in a poor little house on the ramparts of Bonifacio. The city, built on a spur of the mountain, suspended even in some places above the sea, looks over the narrow strait bristling with rocks, to the still lower coast of Sardinia. At its feet, on the other side, skirting it almost entirely, a cut in the cliff resembling a gigantic corridor, serves the town as a harbor, brings to the first houses after a long circuit between two abrupt walls, the little Italian or Sardinian fishing boats, and once a fortnight the old broken-winded steamboat that carries passengers to and from Ajaccio.

On the white mountain the high-clustering houses place, as it were, a whiter stain. They seem like nests of wild birds fastened to this rock, dominating this terrible passage wherein the ships never venture. The wind incessantly worries the sea, worries the rugged coast which it has whipped almost bare of verdure; it is swallowed up in the whirlpool channel whose two sides it ravages. Scattered trains of pale white foam clinging to the black points of innumerable rocks which always show above the waves, look not unlike shreds of linen floating and palpitating at the surface of the water.

The Widow Saverini's house, soldered to the very edge

of the cliff, opened its three windows on this wild and desolate horizon.

She lived there alone, with her son Antonio and his dog Sémillante, a large, meager bitch with long, rough hair, of the breed of sheep-dogs. Sémillante, on occasion, served the young man as a hunting dog. . . .

One night after a quarrel, Antonio Saverini was killed treacherously with a knife thrust by Nicolas Ravolati, who the same night made good his escape to Sardinia.

When the old mother received her son's body, which the passers-by brought home to her, she did not weep, but she remained silent and motionless a long time looking upon it; then, stretching out her withered hand over the corpse, she pledged to it the vendetta. She wished no one to stay near her, and she shut herself up alone with the corpse and the dog, which was howling always. The beast kept up this howling in a continuous fashion, standing upright at the foot of the bed, with head stretched toward its master and tail pressed between its legs. It moved no more than the mother, who, leaning now over the body, with eye fixed, wept great silent tears while contemplating him.

The young man, lying on his back, wearing his vest of coarse cloth, pierced and torn at the chest, seemed as if asleep; but there was blood everywhere—on his shirt, torn open for the first restoratives, on his vest, on his pantaloons, on his hands. Some clots of blood were fixed in his beard and in his hair.

The mother began to talk to him. At the sound of her voice the dog ceased howling.

"Peace, peace, you shall be avenged, my darling, my

son, my poor child. Sleep, sleep, you shall be avenged, do you hear? 'Tis your mother who promises it! And she keeps her word always, your old mother,—you know it well."

And slowly she bent over him, glueing her cold lips upon the dead mouth.

Then Sémillante resumed her howling. She was now uttering a long monotonous plaint,—tearing, horrible. There they both stayed, the old woman and the dog, until morning.

Antonio Saverini was buried the following day, and presently nobody spoke any more about him in Bonifacio.

He had left neither brother nor near cousins. No man was there to follow up the vendetta. Alone, the mother was thinking of it—the old woman.

She now set herself to watch, on the other side of the strait, from morning till night, a white point on the coast. It is a little Sardinian village called Longosardo, where the Corsican bandits take shelter when pressed too close. Alone, they almost people this hamlet facing the hills of their country; and there they await the moment of returning—of returning to the *maquis*. There in this village, she knew, Nicolas Ravoïati had found a refuge.

All alone, through the long day, seated at the window, she kept looking down there, whilst thinking of vengeance. What could she do, without anybody to help her, weak, so near unto death herself? But she had promised—she had vowed the vendetta—she had sworn upon the corpse! She could not forget; she could not wait. What could she do? . . .

That night she slept no more; she had neither rest nor appeasement; she kept searching in her mind obstinately. The dog at her feet was sleeping, but from time to time, raising her head, howled at something in the distance. Often since her master was gone, she howled in this fashion,—as if she had been called, as if her soul of a beast had also kept the memory which nothing effaces.

Now, one night as *Sémillante* was beginning to bark, Mother Saverini had an idea—the idea of a vindictive and ferocious savage. She meditated it until morning; then, having risen at dawn, she went to church. She prayed, prostrate on the pavement, on her hands and knees before God, begging Him to aid her, to give her poor weak body the strength which she needed in order to avenge her son.

Then she returned to her house. There was in her yard an old dilapidated barrel which collected water from the gutters; she upset this, emptied it and then set it up again solidly, supporting it with stakes and stones; then she chained *Sémillante* to this kennel, and went into her house.

The dog barked all day and all night. Next morning the old woman gave her some water, but no soup or bread.

Again the day passed. *Sémillante*, tired out, was sleeping. The following day her eyes were blazing, her hair bristling, and she dragged desperately at her chain.

The old woman still gave her nothing to eat. The beast, now become furious, kept up a constant barking with a raucous voice. The night passed again.

Then at daybreak Mother Saverini went to a neighbor's house and begged two bundles of straw. She took some old clothes which her husband had worn formerly and stuffing them with straw, made a very good scare-

crow. Having planted a stick in the ground in front of Sémillante's kennel, she fastened the manikin to it, which thus seemed to stand erect. Then she figured out a sort of head by means of a package of old linen.

The dog, surprised, kept watching this man of straw, and ceased its barking, although devoured by hunger.

Then the old woman went to buy at the butcher's a long piece of black sausage. Returning to her house, she lighted a wood fire in the yard, near the kennel, and began to fry the meat. Sémillante, frantic, leaped and bounded, foaming at the mouth, her eyes fixed on the cooking meat, the savor of which drove her mad.

The old woman then made of this smoking sausage a sort of cravat for the straw man. She was a long time tying it about the neck, as if to make him swallow it! When this was done she unchained the dog.

With one formidable leap the beast seized the manikin's throat, and her paws on its shoulders, began to tear it into shreds. She fell down, a morsel of the prey in her jaw, then leaped upon it again, burying her teeth in the cords, snatched some pieces of meat, fell again and rebounded with fury. She tore away the face of the dummy with savage bites, leaving the head and neck in tatters.

The old woman, silent and motionless, looked on. Then she chained the dog again, made her fast two days more, and recommenced this strange exercise.

During three months she trained the animal to this kind of struggle, to this meal conquered by her ferocity. Presently she ceased to chain her up, but loosed her with a gesture on the manikin. She taught the dog to tear it, to devour it, without any meat being hidden about its throat;

she would then give the beast, in recompense, the sausage cooked for her.

As soon as she saw the dummy, *Sémillante* shivered, then turned her eyes toward her mistress who cried "Go!" in a piercing voice, pointing her finger.

When she judged the time come, Mother Saverini went to confession and received communion the next Sunday with an ecstatic fervor. Having dressed herself in male attire, so that she looked like an old ragged beggar, she made a bargain with a Sardinian fisherman to take her and her dog across the strait.

She had in a cloth bag a large piece of sausage. *Sémillante* had fasted two days. As they went along the old woman kept teasing and exciting the famished animal by letting her smell the savory food.

They entered Longosardo. The old Corsican woman went hobbling away. She stopped at a barber's and asked where she should find Nicolas Ravolati. He had resumed his old trade, as a carpenter. He was working now in the rear of his shop.

The old woman pushed open the door and called him: "Hey, Nicolas!"

He turned; then loosing the dog she cried: "Go! go! —tear him!"

The maddened animal leaped upon his prey and seized him by the throat. The man stretched his arms, clutched the dog and rolled on the floor. During some seconds he writhed there, beating the ground with his feet; then he lay motionless while *Sémillante* was searching his throat, which she tore into ribbons. . . .

Two neighbors, seated at their doors, recollected perfectly having seen an old beggar leave the carpenter's shop with a lean and hungry dog that was eating, while going along, something black which his master was giving him.

In the evening Mother Saverini returned to her house. She slept well that night.

MOTHER SAUVAGE

(Story of the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71)

FIFTEEN years had passed since I was at Virelogne. I went back to hunt there last autumn, as the guest of my friend Serval, who had lately rebuilt his château which the Prussians destroyed in the war.

I loved that country beyond words. Are there not some delightful corners of the world which have a sensual charm for the eyes? One loves them with a sort of physical passion. We, the chosen few whom the earth seduces, keep a tender memory of certain springs, certain woods, certain ponds, certain hills, often seen, which have affected us like happy events. At odd times the thought returns to a forest nook or a little bank, or an orchard deep in flower, glimpsed but once on a joyous day, which remains in the heart like those images of women you meet on the street of a spring morning, wearing bright and transparent dresses, and who leave with you an unappeased desire that you never forget, a sensation of happiness almost touched—and lost!

At Virelogne I loved all that countryside dotted with little woods and crossed by sparkling streams that run through the land like veins carrying blood to the earth. You had good fishing there, too—crawfish, trout, and eels

—what divine sport! Then you could bathe in certain places, and often you found snipe in the tall grass that grew on the banks of those slender water courses.

I was going along, nimble as a goat, watching my two dogs as they foraged before me. Serval, a hundred yards on my right, was beating a field of lucern. I turned a copse which forms the boundary of the wood of Saudres, and I came upon the charred ruins of a cottage. At once I recalled it as I had seen it the last time, in 1869, neat, vine-covered, with chickens about the door.

What can be more piteous and sad than a dead house, with its skeleton standing upright, dilapidated, ominous? I remembered also that a good woman had given me a glass of wine in this house, on a very fatiguing day, and that Serval had told me the history of these folk. The father, an old poacher, had been killed by the gendarmes. The son, whom I had formerly seen, a tall, dry youth, also passed for a ruthless destroyer of game. People called them the Sauvages.*

Was this a name or a nickname?

I called Serval, and he came toward me with his long, striding gait, like a crane. I asked him, "What became of these people?"

He replied by telling me the following story.

When the war broke out, Sauvage the son, who was then thirty-three years old, enlisted, leaving his mother alone in the house. People did not pity the old woman over-much, because she had some money; they knew that. So she remained quite alone in this isolated cottage, far

* *Les Sauvage*: a proper name, or used punningly, the Wild Ones.

from the village, on the border of the wood. Moreover, she had no fear, being of the same breed as her men; a strong old woman, tall and wiry, who seldom laughed and with whom people did not make jokes. Indeed, the women of the fields do not laugh very much—that is the men's affair, you see! The soul of the peasant woman is narrow and sad, from her life so melancholy and without vista. Her man may pick up a little noisy gayety at the tavern, but his companion remains mirthless, with an expression constantly severe. In truth, the muscles of her face have not learned the movements of laughter.

Mother Sauvage, then, pursued her ordinary existence at the cottage, which was presently covered by the winter snows. She came to the village once a week to get bread and a little meat; then she returned to her house. As there was some rumor of wolves abroad, she went out carrying a gun on her shoulder—her son's piece it was, rusty, with the butt-end worn by friction of the hand. A weird sight she was, the tall old woman, a little stooped, going with slow strides in the snow, the barrel of the gun passing behind the black cap fitting close to her head and confining her white hair which nobody had ever seen.

One day the Prussian invaders arrived. They were billeted among the people, according to the fortune and resources of each household. Mother Sauvage, who was known to be well-to-do, was allotted four of them.

They were four stout young men, blue-eyed and blond of beard and complexion, who had kept fat and rosy in spite of the privations which they had already endured; they were good kindly fellows, besides, although in a conquered country. Alone with this aged woman, they show

ed her every kind attention, sparing her, so far as they could, both labor and expense. You might see the four of them making their morning toilet, in shirt-sleeves, about the well; hugely swishing and splashing their pink-and-white Northmen's flesh with the cold water, the while Mother Sauvage came and went preparing breakfast for them. Or one might see them tidying up the kitchen, scrubbing the stone floor, chopping wood, peeling potatoes, washing the linen, in short and in sum, doing all the necessary chores of the house, like four good sons around their mother.

But she, the old woman, was constantly thinking of her own son, of her great big fellow with the hooked nose and the brown eyes and the heavy moustache that made a thick pad of black hair on his lip. Every day she put this question to each of the foreign soldiers installed at her hearth:

—“Do you know where the French Marching Regiment, Number 23, has gone? My son belongs to that.”

They replied always, in broken French, with their heavy accent: “No, we don't know—don't know at all.”

And they who had mothers of their own far away, being quick to understand her care and anxiety, bestirred themselves to render her many little cares and attentions. Besides, she loved them well, these four enemies of hers, for the peasants do not share much in the so-called patriotic hatreds and antipathies—that is a luxury which they are glad to leave to the superior classes. The humble ones, those who pay the most because they are poor and every new burden crushes them; those who are killed in crowds and masses, who make the true cannon-food because they

are the many; in fine, those who suffer most cruelly from the atrocious miseries of war because they are the weakest and the least able to resist—they care little for and understand less of those warlike enthusiasms, that bellicose madness, that excitable point of honor, and those pretended political combinations which exhaust two rival nations in six months—the victor as well as the vanquished!

People of the country roundabout speaking of Mother Sauvage's Germans, would say: "Well, there are four fellows who have found a snug berth."

Now, one morning, the old woman being alone in the house, she saw in the distance a man coming toward her place. Soon she recognized the postman delivering letters on his round. He gave her a folded paper, and she took from a case the spectacles she used for sewing; putting them on, she read as follows:

MADAME SAUVAGE:

This letter will bring you sad news. Your son Victor was killed yesterday by a cannon shot which one might say cut him in two. I was very near, as we marched side by side in the company, and he spoke to me about you, so that I might send you word on the same day if anything happened to him.

I took his watch from his pocket, and will bring it back to you when the war is over.

I salute you very kindly, CÉSAIRE RIVOT,
Soldier of the 2nd Class, Marching Regiment, No. 23.
The letter was dated three weeks back.

She did not weep, at first, but remained rigid, motionless, so stricken and benumbed that she did not even begin to suffer yet. She kept thinking, "There's Victor killed now!" Then slowly the tears rose to her eyes and grief possessed her heart. Thought came to her one by one, frightful, torturing. She would never embrace him again, her child, her big son—no, never more! The gendarmes had killed the father; now the Prussians had killed the son. He had been cut in two by a cannon ball. And it seemed to her that she saw the thing, the horrible thing: the head falling, the eyes open, while he chewed a bit of his heavy moustache, as he always did when angry. What had they done with his body afterward? If only they had brought her child back to her, as they had brought back her husband, with the bullet in the middle of his forehead.

But she heard the sound of voices; it was the Prussians returning from the village. Quickly she hid the letter in her pocket, and having had the time to dry her eyes, received them calmly, with her ordinary expression. They were all laughing, in the highest spirits, for they were bringing home a fine rabbit, which they had poached, beyond doubt; and they made signs to Mother Sauvage that they were going to have something good to eat. She started at once to prepare the mid-day meal, but when it came to killing the rabbit, the old woman's heart failed her. Nevertheless, it was not the first! One of the soldiers killed it with a fist blow behind the ears.

The animal once dead, she set to work to skin it and draw the red body from the pelt; but the sight of the blood

which she was touching and which covered her hands, of the warm blood which she felt grow cold and coagulate, made her tremble from head to foot. And always she saw her big son cut in two halves, and all red also, like the still palpitating animal.

She sat down to table with her Prussians, but she found herself unable to eat; not a mouthful could she swallow. They devoured the rabbit, without troubling themselves about her. Furtively she watched them without speaking, while an idea grew in her mind; yet her face was so impassive that they suspected nothing. Suddenly she broke out: "I don't even know your names, and here we have been a whole month together."

They understood, not without trouble, what she wanted, and they told their names. But that did not satisfy Mother Sauvage: she made them write their names on a sheet of paper, with the address of their families. Adjusting her spectacles on her great nose, she considered this unknown writing; then she folded the leaf and put it in her pocket, with the letter which had brought word of her son's death.

The meal finished she said to the men: "I am going to work for you." And at once she began to carry bundles of hay up to the garret where they slept.

They were astonished at this work; she explained that it was to make them more comfortable, and they lent her a hand. They heaped the sheaves quite up to the thatched roof, and thus they made a sort of large chamber, with four walls of forage, warm and perfumed. where they would sleep like a charm.

At dinner one of the soldiers was disturbed because Mother Sauvage was still unable to eat. She complained of cramps in the stomach. Then she made a good fire to warm herself, and the four Germans climbed to their lodging place by the ladder, which they used every night. As soon as the trap was closed down again, the old woman took away the ladder, then opened noiselessly the outside door, and went to find some bundles of straw, with which she filled the kitchen. She was going barefoot in the snow, so softly that nobody heard a sound. From time to time she listened to the stertorous and unequal snores of the four sleeping soldiers. When she judged her preparations sufficient, she threw on the hearth one of the bundles, and this having taken fire, she scattered it over the others; then she went out of the house, and watched.

In a few seconds a violent light illuminated all the interior of the cottage; then it became a terrible blaze, a gigantic burning furnace whose flame leaped through the narrow window and threw across the snow a blinding streamer.

Now a great cry came from the top of the house, and this was followed by a clamor of human shrieks, with appeals for help heart-rending in their anguish and terror. Then, the trap having burned through, a whirlpool of fire burst into the garret, pierced the straw roof, rose up to heaven like an immense torch; and all the cottage flamed. Nothing now was heard inside the house save the crackling of the fire, the breaking of the walls, the crashing down of the timbers. Suddenly the roof collapsed, and the burning frame of the house seemed to launch high in air,

in the midst of a cloud of smoke, a great plume of sparks.

The white country, illumined by the fire, shone like a cloth-of-silver tinted with red.

In the distance a bell began to toll. Still Mother Sauvage stood erect on guard before the ruined home, armed with her gun—her son's weapon—for fear that one of these men should escape.

When she saw that all was ended, she threw the arm into the fire. A report followed.

Some people were coming now—the peasants, the Prussians.

They found the old woman seated on a tree-stump, tranquil and content.

A German officer who spoke French like a son of France, questioned her:

“Where are your soldiers?”

She stretched her bony arm toward the red heap of the now dying fire, and she answered with a strong voice:

“Inside there!”

They pressed around her. The Prussian demanded:

“How did the house take fire?”

She declared: “I set it on fire myself.”

They refused to believe her; they judged that the disaster had suddenly turned her mind. Then as the crowd surrounded and listened to her, she told her story from beginning to end; from the coming of the letter to the last cry of the men burned in the house. Not a single detail did she forget of what she had felt or of what she had done.

When she had finished she took from her pocket two papers, and in order to distinguish them in the last flickerings of the fire, she again put on her spectacles. Showing one paper she said, "There, that's Victor's death;" showing the other, she added, with a nod of her head toward the red ruins, "There, that's their names, so you may write to their people." Calmly she handed the white leaf to the officer who held her by the shoulders, and she ended in a stronger tone:

"You must write how it all happened, and you shall tell their parents that it was I who did this—Victoire Simon, la Sauvage! Do not forget."

The officer shouted some orders in German. She was seized and thrown against the wall, still hot, of her house. Then twelve men drew up quickly in front of her, at twenty paces. Mother Sauvage did not budge. She had understood; she was waiting.

An order rang out, followed almost instantly by a long report. A belated shot was fired all alone, after the others.

The old woman did not fall; she sank down as if the legs had been cut from under her.

The Prussian officer drew near. She was almost cut in two, and in her withered hand she still held her letter, bathed in blood.

My friend Serval added:

It was by way of reprisals that the Germans destroyed the château of the district, which happened to be my property.

But I was thinking of the mothers of those four kind

lads burned inside there; and of the atrocious heroism of this other mother, fusilladed against the wall.

And I picked up a little stone, still blackened from the fire.

A FISHING PARTY

(*Deux Amis*)

PARIS was blockaded, famished, with the death rattle in her throat.* The sparrows made themselves very scarce on the roofs, and even the sewers were being dispeopled of their regular tenants. People were eating—no matter what.

As he was promenading sadly on a bright January morning along the outer boulevard, his hands in the pockets of his uniform and his belly empty, Monsieur Morissot, clock-maker by trade and slipper-maker on occasion, stopped short before a compatriot whom he recognized as a friend. It was Monsieur Sauvage, a fishing acquaintance.

Every Sunday before the war Morissot was in the habit of starting at daybreak, a bamboo pole in one hand and a tin box slung over his shoulder. He took the Argenteuil railroad, got off at Colombes and walked to the island Marante. No sooner had he arrived in this place of his dreams than he began to fish; and he fished until night.

Every Sunday he met there a little plump and jovial man, Monsieur Sauvage, a merchant of Rue Nôtre Dame de Lorette, another enthusiastic fisherman. Often they

* Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71.

passed a half day side by side, with fishing line in hand and feet swinging over the current; and they had taken a great liking to each other.

On certain days they hardly talked at all. Sometimes they chatted, but they understood each other admirably without saying a word, having similar tastes and identical sympathies.

On a fine spring morning toward ten o'clock, when the rejuvenated sun caused to float over the tranquil stream that little mist which flows with the water, Morissot would sometimes say to his neighbor, "Ah! but it's good here!" And Monsieur Sauvage would reply, "I know of nothing better." And that sufficed to their mutual understanding and esteem.

In the autumn, toward the end of the day, when the sky all reddened by the setting sun threw upon the water figures of scarlet clouds, empurpled the whole river, kindled the horizon like a conflagration, made the two friends as red as fire and touched with gold the russet trees already shivering with a breath of winter, Sauvage would look smilingly at Morissot and exclaim, "What a spectacle!" and Morissot, filled with wonder, would reply, without lifting his eyes from his floater, "It's finer than the boulevard, eh, old fellow?"

Now as soon as they had recognized each other they shook hands warmly, affected at meeting again under circumstances so different. M. Sauvage, breathing a sigh, murmured: "Ah, what events there have been!" Morissot, very gloomy, moaned, "And what weather! To-day is the first fine day of the year."

The sky was, indeed, all blue and full of light.

They walked along side by side, dreamy and sad. Morissot remarked, "And the fishing? Ah! what a pleasant memory!" Sauvage demanded, "When shall we return to it?"

They entered a little café and sipped an absinthe together; then they resumed their promenade along the sidewalk.

Morissot stopped suddenly: "Another green, eh?" M. Sauvage consented: "At your pleasure." And they went into another wine-shop.

They were very giddy and bewildered on coming out, like persons fasting whose stomachs are full of alcohol. The weather was delightful. A caressing breeze played on their faces.

M. Sauvage, whose intoxication the warm air had completed, stood still: "Suppose we go there."

"Where do you mean?"

"Why a-fishing, of course."

"But where?"

"Why, to our island. The French advance posts are near Colombes. I know Colonel Dumoulin—they will let us pass easily."

Morissot trembled with desire. "It's done—I am with you." And they separated in order to go home and get their fishing tackle.

An hour after they were marching side by side on the main road. Soon they reached the villa occupied by Colonel Dumoulin. He smiled at their request and consented to their odd whim. They took up their march again, furnished with a passport.

Presently they crossed the advance posts, traversed Colombes, now abandoned, and found themselves on the border of some little vineyards which slope down toward the Seine. It was about eleven o'clock.

Before them the village of Argenteuil seemed dead. The heights of Orgemont and of Sannois dominated all the country. The immense plain which extends as far as Nanterre was bare, entirely bare, with its naked cherry trees and gray lands.

M. Sauvage, pointing a finger at the heights, murmured: "The Prussians are up there!" And a great fear paralyzed the two friends before this deserted country.

"The Prussians!" They had never seen them, but they *felt* them here during some months, around Paris, destroying France, pillaging, slaughtering, causing the famine, invisible and all-powerful. And a kind of superstitious terror added itself to the hatred which they had for this unknown and victorious people.

Morissot faltered, "What if we should fall into them?"

M. Sauvage replied with that Parisian humor which nothing can extinguish, "We should offer them a fry!"

Still they hesitated to venture into the country, intimidated by the silence all around the horizon.

At length M. Sauvage made up his mind: "Come on, let's make a start. But caution's the word." And they descended into a vineyard, crouching low, crawling on all fours, profiting by the bushes in order to hide themselves, with eyes alert and ears strained to the pitch.

A strip of bare land remained to cross in order to reach the river bank. They broke suddenly into a run, and as

soon as they had gained the bank, they squatted flat in the dry reeds.

Morissot glued his ear to the ground, trying to detect any sound of the enemy marching in the country around them. He heard nothing. They were indeed alone—absolutely alone. Feeling now thoroughly reassured, they began to fish.

Precisely in front of them lay Marante Island, now abandoned, hiding them from the other shore. The little restaurant house was closed, looking as though it had been deserted for years.

M. Sauvage took the first trout, Morissot landed the second, and from moment to moment they raised their poles with a little silvered animal at the end of the line. Truly a miraculous fishing!

They put the catch carefully into a net with very close meshes, which lay soaking at their feet. And a delicious joy pervaded them, the sort of joy that seizes you when you recover a beloved pleasure of which you have been deprived a long time.

The genial sun poured its warmth between their shoulders; they heard nothing more at all; they thought of nothing; they ignored and forgot the rest of the world: they were fishing!

But suddenly a heavy sound which seemed to come from under the earth caused the ground to tremble. The cannon was again beginning to thunder.

Morissot turned his head, and above the river bank he saw down there toward the left, the mighty silhouette of Mount Valerian which carried on its crest a white plume, a smoke of powder which it had just spit out. And at

once a second jet of smoke leaped from the summit of the fortress, followed in a few instants by a new explosion.

Then other detonations succeeded, and momentarily the mountain belched its deadly breath and exhaled its milky vapors, which rose slowly in the calm heaven, making a cloud above it.

M. Sauvage shrugged his shoulders. "They are beginning again," he said.

Morissot, who was anxiously watching his floater as it bobbed up and down, was suddenly seized with the rage of a peaceable man against those lunatics who were thus fighting. "Men must be mad to kill one another like that," he burst forth.

M. Sauvage rejoined: "They are worse than wild beasts."

And Morissot, who had just taken a trout, declared: "And to think that it must be always thus, so long as there are governments!"

M. Sauvage interjected: "But the Republic would not have declared this war——"

Morissot interrupted him: "With kings we have war on the outside; with the Republic we have war on the inside."

So they went on arguing the matter tranquilly, clearing up great political problems with the same reason of men good-natured and of limited vision; agreeing upon this point, that the people would never be free. And Mount Valerian thundered incessantly, demolishing French houses with cannon balls, crushing out lives, destroying human beings, putting a sad end to many dreams,

to many expected joys, to much hoped-for happiness; opening in the hearts of women, of girls and of mothers in other countries, sufferings that would never cease.

"Such is life," declared Monsieur Sauvage.

"Say rather such is death," replied Morissot, laughing.

Then they started with fear, feeling rather than hearing a sound of marching feet behind them; and turning their eyes they saw standing bolt upright at their shoulders four men, four tall, armed and bearded men, dressed in livery like servants, wearing flat helmets and with guns leveled point-blank at them.

The two fishing lines dropped from their hands and floated swiftly down the river.

In a few seconds they were seized, bound, lifted up, thrown into a boat and carried over to the island. And behind the restaurant which they had believed to be abandoned, they saw a score of German soldiers.

A sort of hairy giant sitting astride a chair and puffing at a long porcelain pipe, asking them in excellent French: "Well, gentlemen, have you had good sport?"

Then a soldier placed at the officer's feet the net full of fishes which he had taken care to bring over. The Prussian smiled. "Ah, I see indeed that it was not going badly. But now we have another matter on our hands. Hear me and do not be troubled.

"For me you are two spies, sent to watch me. I take you and I shoot you. You were making a pretence of fishing in order to hide your real projects. You fell into my hands. So much the worse for you: such is war!

"But as you came through the advance posts you have undoubtedly the password to return. Give me that word and you shall go free."

The two friends, livid, side by side, their hands agitated with a slight nervous trembling, remained silent.

The officer went on: "Nobody will ever know it, you shall return peaceably. The secret will disappear with you. If you refuse, it is death, and at once. Make your choice!"

They stood motionless, without opening their mouths.

The Prussian, always calm, continued, extending his hand with a significant gesture toward the river: "Think that in five minutes you will be at the bottom of this water. In five minutes! You must have families?"

Mount Valerian was thundering always.

The two fishermen remained upright and silent. The German gave some orders in his own tongue. Then he shifted his chair in order not to be too near the prisoners. Twelve armed soldiers marched up and halted at twenty paces from the prisoners.

The officer said: "I give you one minute—not two seconds more."

Then he rose quickly, approached the two Frenchmen, took Morissot by the arm, drew him aside and said in a low voice:

"Quick, the password! Your comrade shall know nothing—I shall pretend to relent."

Morissot answered nothing.

The Prussian then took Monsieur Sauvage aside and made the same demand of him. Sauvage did not answer.

They were now again side by side.

The officer gave the first word of command. The soldiers raised their arms.

Then Morissot's glance fell by chance on the net full of fishes, lying on the grass a few feet away. A ray of sunlight caused the heap of fishes to sparkle; they were still alive and squirming. In spite of his efforts Morissot's eyes filled with tears.

He faltered: "Adieu, Monsieur Sauvage."

M. Sauvage answered: "Adieu, Monsieur Morissot."

They clasped hands, shaken from head to foot with invincible emotion.

The officer cried, "Fire!" . . . The twelve shots sounded like one.

M. Sauvage fell flat on his face. Morissot, being taller, wavered, pivoted and fell across his comrade, his face upturned to the sky, while bubbles of blood escaped from his tunic which had been pierced at the chest.

The German gave more orders. His men scattered, then returned with cords and stones, which they attached to the dead men's feet; then they carried them to the river bank.

Mount Valerian never ceased its deep rumblings, covered now with another mountain of smoke.

Two soldiers took Morissot by the head and the feet; two others seized Sauvage in the same fashion. The bodies, balanced an instant with force, were launched far out, described a curve, then plunged upright into the stream, the stones dragging the feet first. The water splashed, bubbled, shivered, then grew calm again while many little waves went to either shore.

A little blood floated.

The officer, always serene, said in a low voice: "It is the fishes' turn now." Then he turned toward the house.

And suddenly he saw the net with the trout lying in the grass. He picked it up, examined it, smiled, and called, "Wilhelm!"

A soldier in a white apron ran forward. And the officer, throwing him the catch of the two fusilladed men, ordered: "Have this mess fried at once while they are still alive. That will be delicious."

Then he went on smoking his pipe.

A TRAGEDY OF THE WAR

(La Folle)

BLESS my soul, said Matthew d'Endolen, the woodcocks * recall to me a very sad and tragical incident of the war. †

You know my property in the faubourg of Cormeil. I was living there at the moment when the Prussians arrived. One of my neighbors was a species of lunatic, though perfectly harmless, whose mind had given way under the blows of misfortune. Formerly at the age of twenty-five, she had lost in the space of a single month her husband, her father, and her new-born child.

When death has once entered a house, it almost always returns there directly, as if it knew the door.

The poor young woman, broken by grief and suffering, took her bed and lay there delirious during six weeks. Then, a sort of calm weariness following this violent crisis, she still kept her bed, motionless, hardly eating at all, only moving her eyes. Whenever those about her wished to make her get up, she cried as if they were going to kill her. So they left her always in bed, only taking her from it for the cares of the toilet, and when it was necessary to turn her mattress.

* See *Contes de La Bécasse* by de Maupassant.

† The Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71.

An old woman servant waited on her, giving her something to drink from time to time, or a morsel of cold meat. What was passing in that bewildered soul? No one ever knew, for she spoke no more. Was she thinking of the dead? Was she dreaming sadly, without any clear or definite recollection of the past? Or, indeed, had her thought, destroyed, remained stagnant, motionless like water without a current?

During fifteen years she existed in this way, shut up in her room and to all intents lifeless.

The war came, and in the first days of December the Prussians penetrated to Corneil. I remember all that like a thing of yesterday. It was freezing to split the stones, and I had stretched myself in a long chair, being at the time helpless with the gout, when I heard the heavy and rhythmical tread of their marching feet. I saw them pass, as I looked from my window.

They went by interminably, all similar, with that grotesque movement of marionettes which is peculiar to the German soldiers. Then the officers distributed their men among the people. I had seventeen of them. My neighbor, the demented woman, was allotted twelve, whose commander was a soldier of the arbitrary Prussian type, violent, surly, and pigheaded.

Affairs went normally enough in the first days of the occupation. They had told the officer, privately, that the lady of the house was sick; and he gave himself little trouble about her. But soon, the thought of this woman whom nobody ever saw, began to annoy him. He inquired as to her disease, and was told that his hostess had been confined to her bed during fifteen years as the

result of a great affliction. Undoubtedly he did not believe the story, and he imagined that the poor creature would not leave her bed through pride, in order that she might not have to see the Prussians, or to speak to them, or to come in contact with them.

He demanded that she should receive him, and he was invited to enter her chamber. Then, addressing her in a harsh voice, with a heavy Teuton accent, he said:

"I must beg you, Matame, to get up und gome downstairs, in order that ve may have the bleasure of seeing you."

She turned upon him her vague eyes, void of all expression, and answered not a word.

He continued: "I vill not dolerate any insolence. If you do not rise of your own goot vill, I shall find means to make you bromenate all by yourself."

The sick woman made not even a gesture, always motionless and impassive as if she did not see him.

He raged, mistaking this calm silence for a mark of supreme contempt. And he added: "If you have not gome down by to-morrow——" Then he went out.

On the morrow the old nurse, almost mad herself with grief and despair, attempted to dress her; but the poor, senseless creature began to scream and struggle desperately. The officer quickly ran upstairs, and the servant, throwing herself upon her knees, appealed to him:

"She does not wish to get up, Monsieur, she does not wish to get up. Have pity and pardon her—she is so unfortunate!"

The soldier stood hesitating and embarrassed, not dar-

ing, in spite of his anger, to have her dragged from the bed by his men. But suddenly he began to laugh, as having hit upon a happy idea, and he gave some orders in German.

And soon I saw a detachment of soldiers leave the house carrying a mattress, as a wounded person is carried. In this couch, which had not been undone, the demented woman, always silent, remained perfectly tranquil, indifferent to anything that might happen, so long as she was permitted to lie abed. A soldier marching behind, carried a bundle of feminine apparel.

And the officer pronounced, while rubbing his hands genially:

"Ve shall see if you are able to tress yourself all alone und make a leetle bromenate."

Then I watched the procession disappearing in the direction of the forest of Imauville.

Two hours later the soldiers returned without her.

We never saw the hapless victim again. What had they done with her? Where had they carried her? We never were able to learn.

The snow was falling day and night, burying the plain and the woods under a shower of frozen foam. And the wolves, grown bold and ravenous, came to howl at our very doors.

I was haunted by the thought of this poor unfortunate, and I made several attempts at the Prussian headquarters to get some information as to her fate. I was within an ace of being shot for my pains.

The spring returned. The army of occupation de-

parted. My neighbor's house remained shut up. The thick grass sprang up in the alleys. During the winter the old nurse had died. Nobody any longer concerned himself about this sinister drama; alone, I thought about it constantly. What had the Prussians done with this woman? Had she made her escape through the woods? Had the people picked her up somewhere and kept her in a hospital, without being able to elicit from her any information? Nothing happened to enlighten my doubts; but little by little time appeased the painful anxiety of my heart.

Now, in the following autumn, the woodcocks passed in great multitude; and as my gout was giving me a little respite, I dragged myself as far as the woods. Already I had killed four or five of the long-beaked birds, when I brought down one that disappeared in a ditch partly filled with brushwood. I was forced to go down into it in order to recover my game, and near it I found a death's head, with a few bones of the skeleton. Then swiftly the thought of the maniac struck me in the heart like a fist blow. Many others had died in this wood, perhaps, in that fatal year; but I know not why, I was sure, sure I tell you, that I had found the head of this unfortunate creature.

And suddenly I understood, I divined the whole. They had abandoned her on the mattress, in the forest, cold and deserted; and faithful to her fixed idea, she would not rise from her bed, but allowed herself to perish under the thick and light down of the snow, and without moving hand or foot.

Then the wolves had devoured her.

And the birds had made their nests with the wool of her torn bed.

I have kept this sad relic of death. And I pray that our sons may never see another war.

APPARITION

THEY were talking of sequestration—(the legal setting aside of the property of a deceased person)—àpropos of a recent lawsuit. It was toward the close of an intimate social evening in a fine old house in the Rue de Grenelle, and each one had his story to tell, a story he affirmed to be true.

Finally the aged Marquis de la Tour-Samuel rose from his chair and came to lean against the chimney-piece. He began in his slightly tremulous voice:

“I, also, know a strange thing, so strange that it has been the obsession of my life. It is now fifty-six years since this adventure happened to me, and yet not a month passes but I see it over again, as in a dream. From that day there has remained in me a mark, an impression of fear. Yes, I suffered unspeakable fear during ten minutes, in such sort that from that hour a kind of constant terror has been fixed in my soul. Unexpected noises startle me to the very heart; objects that I perceive ill in the shadow of evening give me a wild wish to flee. In a word, I am afraid at night.

“Oh, I should not have confessed this when I was younger: at my present age I may avow anything. It is allowable to shrink before imaginary dangers when one is eighty-two years old. Before actual dangers I have never flinched, Mesdames!

"This affair so shocked and overthrew my spirit, cast in my mind a trouble so profound, so mysterious, so terrible, that I have never heretofore told the story. I have kept it in the uttermost depth of my soul,—in that place sacred to our inner self, where we hide the painful secrets, the shameful things, all the unavowable weaknesses of our lives.

"I am going to tell you the thing just as it was, without attempting to explain it. Likely enough there may be an explanation for it, unless I had my hour of madness. But no, I was not mad; and I shall give you the proof of it. Imagine what you please—here are the simple facts.

"In the month of July, 1827, I was in garrison at Rouen. One day, as I was strolling on the quay, I saw a man whose appearance seemed familiar, although I could not recall precisely who he was. Instinctively I made a movement as if to stop. The stranger perceived this gesture, looked at me, and fell into my arms.

"He was a friend of my youth of whom I had been very fond. During the five years since I had last seen him he seemed to have aged a half-century. His hair was all white and he walked with a stoop, as if broken down. He understood my surprise and told me the story of his life. A terrible misfortune had stricken him.

"Having fallen madly in love with a young girl, he had married her in a sort of ecstasy of happiness. After a year of superhuman felicity and passion unappeasable, she died suddenly of a disease of the heart,—killed by love itself, beyond doubt. He had left his château the very day of the burial, and come to live in his house at Rouen. There he was living now, solitary and in despair, devoured

by grief, so wretched that he could think only of suicide.

“‘Since I thus meet you again,’ he said, ‘I shall ask you to do me a great service,—to go to the château and get some papers for me, of which I have urgent need. You will find them in a writing desk in my room—in *our* room. I cannot charge a subaltern or a lawyer’s clerk with this duty, for I must have an impenetrable discretion and an absolute silence. As for myself, I would not return to that house for anything in the world!’

“‘I shall give you the key of that chamber, which I locked up myself on leaving, and also the key of my writing desk. Besides, you shall deliver a note from me to my gardener, who will admit you to the château. But come and breakfast with me to-morrow, and we will talk of all this.’

“‘I promised to perform this slight service for him—what was it but a promenade, his estate lying not more than five miles from Rouen? At the most, an hour on horse-back.

“‘At ten o’clock next morning I was at his house in Rouen. We breakfasted alone together, but he did not speak twenty words. He begged me to excuse him; the thought of the visit I was about to make to that house—to that chamber where his happiness lay buried, overpowered him, he said. Indeed, he seemed strangely agitated and preoccupied, as if a mysterious combat were being waged in his soul.

“‘Finally, he explained to me exactly what I should do. It was very simple. I was to get two packets of letters and a bundle of papers from the first right-hand drawer

of the secretary to which I held the key. He added:

“‘I . . . I have no need to beg you not to look about that room.’

“I was hurt by this speech, and I told him so a little sharply. He stammered: ‘Pardon me, my friend; I suffer so much.’ And he began to weep. . . . I left him toward one o’clock in order to perform my mission.

“It was radiant weather, and soon I was going at a rapid trot across the prairies, hearing the songs of the larks and the rhythmic sound of my sabre on my boot.

“Then I entered the forest and I drew up my horse to a walk. Branches of trees caressed my face; and sometimes I caught a leaf between my teeth and chewed it hungrily in one of those joys of living which fill you, one knows not why, with a tumultuous and, as it were, unseizable happiness—with a kind of intoxication of strength.

“On approaching the château, I searched in my pocket for the letter which I was to give the gardener, and I discovered to my astonishment that it was sealed. I was so surprised and irritated that I was almost on the point of turning back, leaving my errand unperformed. Then I thought that in so acting I should convict myself of bad taste. Besides, my friend might well have sealed the letter unwittingly, in his great trouble and distress.

“The manor seemed to have been deserted during twenty years. Open and dilapidated, the gate held upright you knew not how. Grass filled the walks; you could not distinguish the borders of the flowerbeds.

“At the noise I made kicking against a shutter an old man started from a side-door, and seemed stupefied at

seeing me. I leaped to the ground and delivered my letter. He read it, re-read it, turned it over in his hands, considered me furtively, put the paper in his pocket and said:

“ ‘Well! what do you want?’

“I answered brusquely: ‘You ought to know, since you have received there your master’s orders: I wish to enter the château.’

“He seemed thunderstruck. After a pause he articulated: ‘Then you are going into . . . into *her* chamber?’

“I was beginning to lose patience. ‘The devil!—Is it your purpose to cross-examine me?’

“He stammered: ‘No . . . Monsieur . . . but the fact is . . . that is to say, the room has not been opened since the death. If you will only wait five minutes I’ll go and see if . . . go and see if . . .’

“I broke in angrily: ‘Come now, are you going to make a fool of me? How can you enter that room since I have the key?’

“He knew not what to say. ‘Then, Monsieur, I will show you the way.’

“ ‘Show me the stairway and leave me alone. I shall find my way without you.’

“ ‘But . . . Monsieur . . . notwithstanding . . .’

“This time I was provoked beyond bounds. ‘Now are you going to shut up and leave me alone, or do you want to have trouble with me?’ So saying, I pushed him roughly aside and entered the house.

“First I went through the kitchen, and then through two small rooms occupied by this man and his wife. I

crossed then a large vestibule, I mounted the stairs, and I recognized the door described by my friend.

"I opened it without difficulty and I entered.

"The room was so deep in shadow that I could distinguish nothing at first. I stopped, seized by that mildewed, insipid odor peculiar to rooms uninhabited and condemned,—death chambers. Then, little by little, my eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, and I saw plainly enough a large room in disorder and a bed without bed-clothing, but with mattresses and pillows, one of which bore the deep impression of an elbow or a head, as if someone had just lain down there.

"Some chairs were scattered about. I remarked that one door, that of a wardrobe evidently, stood partly open.

"I went at once to the window to admit more light, and I opened it, but the shutter-fastenings were so rusted that I could not budge them. I even tried to break them with the hilt of my sword: As I was only irritating myself by these useless efforts, and as by this time my eyes had become used to the dim light, I gave up the hope of seeing more clearly and went to the secretary.

"I sat down in a chair before it, I lowered the tablette, I found the drawer indicated by my friend. It was stuffed with papers. I wanted only three packets which I knew how to identify, and I began a careful search.

"I was straining my eyes to the utmost in order to decipher the superscriptions, when I thought I heard or rather felt a rustling behind me. I gave no heed to it, thinking that a breath of air had moved a curtain.

"But in a minute another movement, scarcely perceptible, caused a singular little disagreeable shiver to pass

along my spine. It was so cowardly and stupid to admit such a sensation that I hated to turn around, through shame for myself. I had just found the second packet that I wanted, and was on the point of taking up the third, when a deep and painful sigh breathed against my shoulder made me leap like a madman clear across the room.

"In my panic I had turned completely round, the hand on the hilt of my sword, and certainly had I not felt it at my side, I should have fled like a coward.

"A tall woman, dressed in white, was looking at me, standing behind the chair where I had been seated a second before.

"Such a shock ran through my members that I almost fell backward. Oh, nobody can understand that awful terror, unless he has experienced it. The soul melts; the heart ceases to beat; the entire body becomes soft as a sponge; all one's inner physical self seems to collapse.

"I do not believe in ghosts—well! I almost swooned under the hideous fear of the dead, and I suffered, oh! suffered during a few moments more than in all the rest of my life, in the anguish of supernatural terror.

"If she had not spoken I should have gone mad, perhaps. But she spoke: she spoke in a sweet and sorrowful voice that made the nerves vibrate.

"I dare not say that I regained control of myself, or that I recovered my reason. No, I was distracted to such a point that I knew not what I was doing; but that intimate pride of self which is part of my character and also my feeling as a soldier, enabled me to keep, almost in spite of myself, an honorable bearing. I was posing for myself, as it were, and for her, too, undoubtedly; for her,

whatever she might be, woman or ghost. I accounted for all this to myself later, for I assure you that in the instant of the apparition, I could think of nothing. I was simply paralyzed with fear.

"She said: 'Oh, Monsieur, you can do me a great service!'

"I wished to answer, but found it impossible to utter a word. A vague noise issued from my throat.

"She went on: 'Are you willing? You can save me—cure me. I suffer dreadfully—oh, how I suffer!'

"She sat down softly in my chair. She looked at me fixedly. 'Do you wish to help me?'

"I nodded 'Yes!' my voice being still paralyzed.

"Then she reached me a tortoise-shell comb, murmuring:

"Comb me, oh, comb me! that will cure me—some one *must* comb me! Look at my head . . . How I am suffering; and my hair makes me ill!'

"Her hair undone, very long, very black, hung over the back of the chair and touched the floor.

"Why did I do it? Why did I, shivering, receive the comb from her hand? And why did I take up in my hands her long hair which gave me a sensation of frightful cold as though I had touched serpents? That sensation long remained in my fingers, and I start only to think of it.

"I combed her. I handled, I know not how, that icy headdress, I twisted it, I braided and then unbraided it; I tressed it as one tresses a horse's mane. She was breathing long breaths; her head bent low; and she seemed happy.

"Suddenly she said, 'Thanks!' snatched the comb from my hands and fled through the door which I had remarked to be partly open.

"Left alone, I had during some seconds the fear and confusion of awakening that follow a nightmare. Finally I recovered my senses and, running to the window, burst open the shutters with a furious attack.

"A flood of light filled the room. I threw myself against the door through which the Being had gone. I found it closed and it resisted me like a rock.

"Then a fever of flight seized upon me,—a panic,—the true panic of battles. I caught up hastily the three packets of letters from the open secretary; I dashed from the room and leaped down the stairs four at a time; I found myself outside but by what exit I never knew, and seeing my horse within a few paces, I bounded into the saddle and started off at a gallop.

"I drew rein only at Rouen, and before my quarters. Throwing the bridle to an orderly, I escaped to my room where I shut myself up in order to reflect upon this terrible event.

"Then, during an hour, I asked myself if I had not been the sport of an hallucination. Surely I had had one of those incomprehensible nervous attacks, one of those disorders of the brain which give birth to miracles and to which the Supernatural owes its power.

"And I was going to believe in a vision—an error of the senses—when I drew near the window and inadvertently my glance fell on my breast. *My coat was full of long hairs which were twined around the buttons!*

"I seized them one by one with trembling fingers and threw them out of the window.

"Then I called my orderly. I felt too much moved and troubled to go to my friend's house that day. And, besides, I wished to reflect carefully as to what I ought to tell him. I sent him his letters, and he gave a receipt to the soldier. He inquired very much about me and was told that I was sick, having received a slight sunstroke; or something of the sort. He seemed greatly disturbed.

"I went to his house next morning at dawn, resolved to tell him the truth. He had gone out the night before, and had not returned. I went back during the day; no one had seen him again. I waited a week; he did not reappear. Then I informed the authorities. They hunted for him everywhere, without finding a trace of his flight or of his retreat.

"A minute inspection was made of the deserted château. Nothing suspicious was discovered, and no indication revealed that a woman had been hidden there.

"The search, yielding no result, was presently given up.

"And during fifty-six years I have learned nothing that would clear up the mystery. I know nothing more."

FEAR

AFTER dinner we went up on deck again. The Mediterranean extended before us, without a wrinkle on all its surface, shimmering with changeful brilliancy under a large, calm moon. The great ship glided on her way, throwing against the heaven, which seemed to be sown with stars, a thick serpent of black smoke; while in our wake the water foaming white, torn by the rapid passage of the heavy vessel, churned by the screw, writhed, struggled, burst into so many sea-fires that one might have likened it to the light of a boiling moon!

There were six or eight of us, silent, admiring the scene, looking toward the distant Africa whither we were bound. The Commandant, smoking a cigar in the midst of us, suddenly resumed a conversation we had begun at dinner.

"Yes, I was terribly afraid that day. My ship remained for six hours beaten by the sea, with a great rock in her side. Luckily we were picked up toward night by an English collier which had sighted us."

Then a tall man, sunburned to a tint of bronze and of grave aspect—one of those men who, one feels, has traversed great unknown countries in the midst of incessant perils, and whose tranquil eye seems to keep in its depth something of the strange landscape he has seen, one of

those men whose courage, one divines, has been proven like tempered steel, spoke for the first time.

"You say, Commandant, that you were afraid—that you experienced great fear—on this occasion? Pardon me!—I am quite unable to agree with you that such was the fact. You deceive yourself both as to the word 'fear' and the sensation which it describes. An energetic man knows no fear, is never afraid in face of pressing danger. He may be disturbed, agitated, anxious; but *Fear*—that is a different thing."

The Commandant answered, laughing:

"The deuce you say! I declare to you frankly that I was thoroughly frightened, all the same."

Then the sun-browned voyager continued, choosing his words deliberately:

"Allow me to explain. Fear—and the boldest men are subject to it—is something frightful, a terrible sensation like the dissolution of the soul, a dreadful convulsion of heart and brain, which merely to recall brings tremors of anguish. But that never happens to a brave man before an attack, or before inevitable death, or before danger in any of its familiar shapes: it happens only in certain abnormal circumstances, under certain mysterious influences, in face of vague and shadowy perils.

"Fear—the *true Fear*—is something like a reminiscence of the fantastic terrors of bygone times. A man who believes in ghosts, and who imagines that he sees one at night, ought to realize fear in all its unspeakable horror.

"I myself suffered this kind of fear in broad daylight, about ten years ago. I felt it again, last winter, through a December night.

"Notwithstanding, I have run many risks, had many adventures which seemed fatal. I have fought often. I have been wounded and left for dead by robbers. I have been condemned, as a rebel, to be hanged in America; and I have been thrown into the sea from the deck of a ship, on the coast of China. Each time I believed myself lost, and I instantly resolved to accept my fate, without emotion and without regrets.

"But that is not *Fear*.

"I have felt it in Africa. And yet it is a child of the North: the sun scatters it like a mist. Note this well, my friends: Life with Orientals counts for nothing; people are there resigned, at once, to any fatality. The nights are clear, without shadow or hint of the lurking unknown, free of those gloomy disquietudes which haunt the mind in cold countries. In the Orient you can experience panic—but you never know *Fear*.

"Well, I am going to tell you what happened to me in this land of Africa.

"I was crossing the great sand dunes to the south of Ouargla.* There surely is one of the strangest countries in the world. You know the smooth sand, the level, flat sand of the innumerable ocean coasts. Well, imagine the ocean itself suddenly turned into sand in the midst of a hurricane; imagine a silent tempest of motionless waves of yellow dust. High as mountains are these unequal surges, towering like billows of the sea in full career, but greater still, their yellow sides striated like watered silk. Upon this formidable ocean, silent and without movement, the devouring sun of the South pours its implacable, direct

* An oasis of the Algerian desert.

rays. You have to climb those ridges or rather blades of burnt cinder, descend again the other side, climb again, climb ever and always, without respite, without repose, and without shade. The horses choke, sink down, buried to the knees, and constantly slip in descending the opposite slope of those amazing sand-hills.

"We were two friends, followed by eight Spahis * and four camels with their drivers. Overcome with heat and fatigue, parched with a thirst like the burning desert itself, we spoke no more to one another, but struggled silently, desperately onward. Suddenly one of our men uttered a strange cry. All stopped, and there we stood, fixed and motionless, halted by a baffling phenomenon of the desert, which is not unknown to travelers in those God-forsaken countries.

"Somewhere, quite near us, but in what precise direction one could not determine, a drum was rolling, the mysterious drum of the sand dunes. It was beating distinctly, now louder and more vibrant, now feebler, dying away, ceasing; then resuming its fantastic music.

"The Arabs, terrified, looked at each other, and one of them said in his tongue: 'Death is upon us!' And suddenly my companion, my friend, almost my brother, fell from his horse head-foremost, stricken by the awful heat of the sun.

"Then, during two hours, while I was vainly trying every possible means to save him, this infernal, unseizable drum filled my ear with its monotonous rat-a-tat-tat, intermittent and mysterious. And I felt it slip into my bones—the fear, the hideous fear, the *true Fear*, before

† Native horse soldiers.

this corpse of my beloved dead, in this hole ravaged by the sun between four mountains of sand; while the unknown echo threw to us, at a distance of two hundred leagues from any French settlement, the rapid beating of the drum.

"That day I understood what it was to have Fear; but I learned it still better another time."

The Commandant interrupted the story-teller.

"Pardon, Monsieur, but this drum you speak of:—what was it?"

The traveler replied:

"I cannot tell you. Nobody seems to know, positively. The French officers, frequently surprised by this ghostlike reveille, explain it in a manner. They attribute it to a hail of sand-grains carried by the wind and striking against a clump of dry vegetation, producing an echo which is multiplied and greatly increased in volume by its passage through the dune hollows. It had been remarked that the phenomenon always occurs in the vicinity of some small plants burned by the sun, and hard as parchment. This drum then would be only a sound-mirage—no more. But I did not learn that until a later day.

"I come to my second experience of the real *Fear*.

"It was last winter in a forest of Northeastern France. So dark was the sky, the night seemed to have come two hours earlier than its wonted time. I had as guide a peasant who marched beside me in a very narrow road under a vault of pine trees from which the furious wind drew howlings. Between the tops of the trees I saw the clouds fleeing in disorder, desperate clouds which seemed

to fly before some terror. From time to time, under an immense squall, the whole forest bowed in the same direction with a moan of anguish; and the cold seized me in spite of my rapid gait and my heavy clothing.

"We were to sup and sleep at the house of an old forester whose place was not very far distant. I was going there to hunt.

"My guide sometimes raised his eyes and murmured, 'What awful weather!' Then he talked about the people to whom we were going. The father had killed a poacher two years before, and since that time he had seemed gloomy, as if haunted by the memory of the deed. His two sons, both married, lived with him.

"The shadows had grown deeper. I could see nothing before me or around me, and all the foliage of the trees interlacing and striking against each other filled the night with an incessant rumor. At length I perceived a light, and presently my companion stumbled against a door. Shrill cries of women responded to us; then a man's voice, a choking voice, demanded:

" 'Who goes there?'

"My guide named himself. We entered and beheld a tableau never to be forgotten.

"An old, white-haired man, wild-eyed, with a loaded gun in hand, awaited us, standing in the middle of the kitchen, while two tall, sturdy fellows armed with axes, guarded the door. I made out in the dark corners two women kneeling, their faces hidden against the wall.

"We explained our visit. The old man set his weapon against the wall, and gave orders to have a room prepared for me; then as the women did not move, he said to me abruptly:

"Look you, Monsieur, I killed a man two years ago this night. Last year he returned to haunt me. I am expecting him again to-night."

"Then he added in a tone which made me smile: 'Consequently we are not much at our ease, as you see.'

"I reassured him as well as I could, and thought myself happy to have come just that night so as to witness a spectacle of superstitious terror. I related some stories, and succeeded finally in calming almost everybody.

"Near the fire an old dog, almost blind and with a moustache, one of those dogs who look like some people you know, slept with his nose between his paws

"Outside a terrific storm was beating against the little house, and through a narrow square of glass, a sort of 'Judas' or peep-hole placed near the door, I got a sudden glimpse of a confused mass of trees hustled by the wind, in the play of great flashes of lightning.

"In spite of my best efforts, I felt, indeed, that a profound terror possessed these people; each time I ceased speaking all ears were strained toward the distance. Weary at length of these imbecile fears, I was going to ask to be shown to my room, when the old game-keeper suddenly leaped from his chair, seized again his musket, exclaiming wildly: 'There he is . . . there he is! I hear him!'

"The two women again fell on their knees in the corners of the room, each hiding her face; and the sons again snatched up their axes. I was going to try once more to quiet them when the old dog, that had been asleep until now, awoke suddenly and raising his head, stretching his neck, looking toward the fire with his eye almost extinct, he emitted one of those lugubrious howls which

startle travelers at night in the country. All eyes now turned to the animal, which remained motionless, stiffened upright on his paws as if petrified by a vision; and he began to howl toward something invisible, unknown, something frightful no doubt, for all his hair bristled on end. The game-keeper, livid with fear, cried out: 'He scents him! he scents him! he was there when I killed him.' And the two distracted women joined their shrieks to the howling of the dog.

"In spite of myself, a great shiver passed along my spine. This vision of the animal, in this place, at this hour, in the midst of these maddened people, was terrifying to witness. Then, during an hour, the dog howled, without budging from his place; he howled weirdly as if in the anguish of a dream. And fear, the true, the terrible *Fear* took hold of me, possessed me completely. Fear of what, you ask? How should I know? It was *the Fear*, that's all!

"We remained paralyzed, livid, in the expectancy of some frightful event, the ear stretched, the heart beating, shocked by the least noise. And the dog began to turn round and round the room, smelling the walls and always howling. The beast was making us mad! Finally the peasant who had brought me, threw himself on the dog, in a sort of paroxysm of furious terror, and opening a door that gave upon a little yard, he flung the animal outside.

"At once he stopped howling; and we were plunged into a silence more terrifying still. Then, suddenly, all together we had a kind of start: somebody was slipping against the outside wall, toward the forest. He passed the door, which he seemed to try with a faltering hand:

then we heard nothing more during two minutes, which suspense made us all perfectly crazy with fear. Then he returned, always rubbing against the wall, and he scratched it lightly, as a child might do with his nail. Suddenly a head appeared against the glass of the Judas—a white head with luminous eyes like those of a deer. And a sound came from his mouth, an indistinct sound like a plaintive murmur.

“Then a formidable explosion burst in the kitchen. The old game-keeper had fired his gun, and instantly the sons rushed forward, and shut off the Judas by placing against it the large table which they backed up with the sideboard.

“And I swear to you that at the noise of that gunshot, which I was not expecting, I suffered such anguish of heart, of soul and body, that I almost swooned away, ready to die of fear.

“Until dawn we remained in the same position, incapable of moving or uttering a word; held by the iron clutch of an unspeakable terror.

“We dared not open the door until we perceived through a crack in the shutter a thin ray of light.

“At the foot of the wall, against the door, the old dog lay, his jaw broken by a bullet. He had got out of the yard by digging a hole under the fence.”

The sun-browned man paused a moment; then he added:

“And yet, on that night I was in no real danger; but, believe me, I would far rather live through again all the hours in which I have affronted the most dreadful perils than the single moment of that gun-shot at the bearded head in the Judas.”

JULIE ROMAIN

Two years ago this spring I was touring the Mediterranean coast on foot. I was following that long road which goes from St. Raphael to Italy, or rather that superb and changing scene which seems to have been made for the representation of all the love-poems of the earth. And I was thinking that from Cannes where they pose, to Monaco where they gamble, people come to this country mostly to make a vulgar display, or to juggle with money, in order to expose under the delicious heaven, in this garden of roses, all the low vanities, the stupid pretensions, the ignoble lusts—in short, to exhibit the human spirit as it is, crawling, ignorant, arrogant, and meanly covetous.

Suddenly, at the back of one of those ravishing bays, which meet you at every turn of the mountain, I saw some villas, four or five only, facing the sea. Behind them a wood of wild pines stretched away in the distance, apparently without road or issue. I stopped short before one of these cottages, so pretty it was; a little white house with brown wainscoting and covered with climbing roses to the roof.

And the garden: a mat of flowers, of all colors and shapes, mingled with an artful and coquettish disorder. The lawn was starred with them; each of the stone steps

carried a tuft at its extremities; from the window shutters blue or yellow clusters hung over the dazzling white front; and the terrace with stone balustrades, which this exquisite little house occupied, was garlanded with large bell-flowers like stains of blood. At the rear a long alley of flowered orange trees reaching to the mountain's foot.

On the door in small gold letters this inscription: *Villa of Yesteryear*.

I asked myself what poet or fairy lived here, what inspired solitary had discovered this place and created this dream-house, which seemed to have grown out of a bouquet.

A peasant was breaking stones on the road, a bit farther along. I asked him the name of the owner of this house. He answered, "Madame Julie Romain. . . ."

Julie Romain! In my childhood I had heard much talk about her,—the great actress, the rival of Rachel. No woman had been more applauded and more loved,—more loved, especially. What duels and what suicides for her, and what resounding adventures! How old was she now, this seductress? Sixty—seventy—seventy-five years? Julie Romain! Here, in this house! The woman whom the greatest musician and the rarest poet of our age had adored! I recalled the emotion caused throughout all France (I was then twelve years old) by her flight to Sicily with the latter after her sensational rupture with the former.

She had started one night after a first presentation at which the house had "risen" at her and recalled her eleven

successive times; she had started with the poet in a post-chaise, as they did in those days; they had crossed the sea in order to go and love each other in the ancient isle, daughter of Greece, under the immense wood of orange trees which surrounds Palermo, and which is called the "Golden Shell."

The world had heard of their ascension of Etna and how they had leaned over the immense crater, cheek to cheek, embracing, as if to throw themselves to the bottom of the fiery whirlpool.

He was dead, now, the man of troubling verses, so profound that they had given a vertigo to a whole generation; so subtle, so mysterious that they had opened a new world to new poets.

The other was dead, also, the deserted one, who had found for her phrases of music which have remained fixed in all memories; phrases of triumph and of despair, passionate and heart-breaking.

She was there in this house veiled with flowers!

I did not hesitate: I rang.

A servant answered the bell, a boy of eighteen, with an awkward air and clumsy hands. I wrote on my card a gallant compliment for the old actress, and begged her to receive me. Perhaps she knew my name and would consent to open her door to me.

The young valet went away, then returned and asked me to follow him. He showed me into a Louis Philippe salon, clean and correct, with cold and heavy furniture, from which a sixteen-year-old maid with a slim waist, but homely enough, removed the covers in my honor.

Then I remained alone.

On the walls three portraits: that of the actress in one of her rôles, that of the poet with the long, tight-fitting frock-coat and frilled shirt then in fashion, and that of the musician seated before a harpsichord. She, blonde, charming, affected in the manner of the time, was smiling with her gracious mouth and blue eyes; and the painting was finished, fine, elegant and dry.

The poet and the musician seemed already to regard the near posterity.

All this gave a sense of other times, of days finished and people disappeared.

A door opened, a little woman entered, old, very old, very little, with a front of white hair and white eyebrows; like a white mouse, rapid and furtive.

She gave me her hand and said in a voice which was still fresh, sonorous and vibrant: "Thanks, Monsieur. How polite it is for the men of to-day to remember the women of the past! Sit down!"

I told her how her house had attracted me, how I had wished to know the name of the proprietor, and how, having learned it, I could not resist the desire to knock at her door.

She said: "This gives me the more pleasure, Monsieur, since it is the first time such a thing has happened. When they handed me your card, with its gracious message, I started as if they had announced an old friend absent during twenty years. I am a dead woman, truly a dead woman, whom no one remembers, of whom nobody thinks, until the day when I shall die for good; and then all the newspapers will speak for three days about Julie Romain,

with anecdotes, details and emphatic eulogies. Then it will be over with me."

She stopped, and then added after a pause: "And that will not be long now. Some months—some days—and of this little woman still living there will remain only a little skeleton."

She raised her eyes toward her portrait, which was smiling at her, at this caricature of itself; then she glanced at the two men, the disdainful poet and the inspired musician, who seemed to say to each other: "What does this ruin want of us?"

An indefinable sadness, poignant and irresistible, pressed my heart; the sadness of lives accomplished which still struggle in memories, as one drowns in deep water.

From my place I saw showy and handsome carriages pass rapidly along the road, going from Nice to Monaco. And seated in them were women, young, pretty, rich, happy; men smiling and satisfied. She followed my glance, understood my thought, and murmured with a resigned smile:

"One cannot be and have been!"

I said: "How beautiful life must have been for you!" She sighed deeply, "Beautiful and sweet. That is why I regret it so much."

I saw that she was disposed to talk of herself; and softly, with delicate precautions, as when one touches wounded flesh, I began to question her.

She spoke of her successes, of her intoxications, of her friends, of all her triumphant existence. I demanded of her: "The liveliest joys, the true happiness, was it to the theater that you owed them?"

She answered quickly, "Oh, no!"

I smiled; she rejoined, throwing a sad glance at the two portraits, "It was to them."

I could not help asking, "To which?"

"To both. I even confound them a little in my old memory, and then I have remorse toward one, to-day."

"Then, Madame, it is not to them, but to love itself that your gratitude goes. They were only love's interpreters."

"Perhaps. But what interpreters!"

"Are you sure that you have not been—that you would not have been, as well or better loved by a simple man who would have devoted to you all his life, all his heart, all his thought, all his hours, all his being; while these offered you two terrible rivals, Music and Poetry?"

She cried out with that voice of hers which had remained young and which caused something to vibrate in the soul:

"No, Monsieur, no! Another would have loved me more, perhaps, but he would not have loved me like these. Ah! did they not sing for me the Song of Love as no one else in the world could have sung it? How they intoxicated me! Could a man,—any man whatever,—find what they knew how to find, in sounds and in words? It is not enough to love if one knows not how to put into love all the poesy and all the music of heaven and earth. And *they* knew how to make a woman mad with songs and with words! Yes, there was perhaps in our passion more of illusion than of reality; but such illusions carry you to the skies, while realities leave you always on the earth. If others loved me more, through these alone I understood, I felt, I adored love!"

And suddenly she began to weep; she wept silently, tears of despair. I pretended not to see and looked away in the distance. She went on, after some moments:

"You see, Monsieur, in the case of most persons the heart grows old with the body. With me that has not happened. My poor body is sixty-nine years old, and my poor heart is but twenty. . . . And now you know why I live alone, amidst flowers and dreams."

A long silence followed between us. She calmed herself and presently took up the thread of talk again, smiling as she did so: "How you would make fun of me if you knew . . . if you knew how I pass my evenings . . . when the weather is fine. I shame and pity myself at the same time."

In vain I begged her to tell me; she remained obdurate; at length I rose to go.

She cried: "Already!"

And as I explained that I was to dine at Monte Carlo, she said timidly, "Then you do not care to dine with me? It would give me very much pleasure."

I accepted at once. She rang, enchanted; then, after giving orders to the little maid, she took me through the house.

A sort of glassed veranda, filled with plants, opened on the dining-room and afforded a view of the long alley of orange trees reaching to the mountain. A low seat half-hidden under some shrubs, indicated that the old actress often came there.

Then we went into the garden to see the flowers. The evening was coming on softly, one of those evenings, warm

and calm, which call forth all the perfumes of the earth. There was hardly any light when we sat down to table. The dinner was good and long, and we became close friends when she had satisfied herself of the deep sympathy awakened for her in my heart. She had taken two fingers of wine, as they used to say formerly, and was becoming more confiding, more expansive.

"Come, let us look at the moon," she said. "I adore her, that good moon. She has been the witness of all my best joys. It seems to me that all my memories are up there; and I have only to contemplate her to make them return to me at once. And even . . . sometimes at night . . . I offer myself a pretty spectacle . . . pretty . . . pretty . . . if you knew! But no, you would make fun of me . . . I cannot . . . I dare not . . . no, no . . . truly, no."

She was hesitating. I took her hands, her little hands, so thin and cold, and I kissed them one after the other, several times, as *they* did formerly. She was touched, but she still hesitated.

"You promise me not to laugh?"

"Yes, I swear it."

"Oh, well, then,—come!"

She rose and as the little valet, awkward in his green livery, took away the chair behind her, she said some words in his ear, very low and quickly. He replied: "Yes, Madame, at once."

She took my arm and led me under the veranda. The alley of orange trees was truly beautiful. The moon, already risen, the full moon, cast a thin path of light, a long line of silver that fell on the yellow sand, among the round,

opaque heads of the sombre trees. As these trees were in flower, their perfume strong and sweet filled the night. And in their black verdure one saw thousands of fireflies flitting, like grains of stars.

I exclaimed, "Oh, what a setting for a love scene!"

"Is it not? is it not? You shall see." And she sat down beside me. She murmured: "This is what makes one regret life. But you men of to-day do not think much of these things. You are brokers, merchants and traders. You know not even how to talk to us—when I say 'us' I mean the young. Loves are become *liaisons* which often have a dressmaker's bill for a beginning. If you estimate the bill dearer than the woman, you disappear; but if you estimate the woman dearer than the bill, you pay. Pretty manners . . . and pretty affections! . . ."

She took my hand: "Look."

I gazed, wondering and amazed. Down there, at the end of the alley, in the moon's path, two young persons came along, holding each other by the waist. They came, enlaced, charming, with short steps, crossing the pools of light which illuminated them suddenly, and then re-entering the shadows. He was dressed in a white satin costume of the last century, and wore a hat covered with an ostrich plume. She wore a dress with paniers and the tall powdered coiffure affected by the grand dames of the Regency.

At a hundred steps from us they stopped and standing in the middle of the alley, embraced and curtsied profoundly. And I suddenly recognized the two little domestics. Then one of those terrible gayeties that almost overpower you, twisted me on my seat. However, I did

not laugh. I resisted, sick, convulsed, like a man under an operation.

But the young ones returned toward the end of the alley, and again they became delightful, fairy-like. They went farther and farther, going away, disappearing as disappears a dream. We saw them no more. The vacant alley seemed sad.

I also started, so as not to see them again. For I guessed that this spectacle was bound to last a long time, which awakened all the past,—all the past of love and illusion, the factitious past, deceiving and seducing, falsely and truly charming, which still caused to beat the heart of the old actress, the old lover!

A WOMAN'S HAIR*

THE four walls of the cell were bare and whitewashed. A narrow, iron-barred window, too high for one to reach, admitted the light to this bright, yet sinister little room. The lunatic, seated on a straw chair, regarded us with a fixed eye, an eye vague and haunted. He was very thin, with hollow cheeks and hair almost white, which, one guessed, had become so in a few months. His clothes were too large for his frail limbs, for his narrow chest, for his shrunken figure. You felt that this man was ravaged, eaten by his thought, by *a thought*, like a fruit by a worm. His madness, his Idea, was there, in that head, obstinate, harassing, devouring. It was eating his body little by little. It,—the Invisible, the Impalpable, the Unseizable, the Immaterial Idea was sapping the flesh, drinking the blood, quenching the life of the man.

* Of all Maupassant's wonderful stories, perhaps there is not one, with the possible exception of "Le Horla," which, owing to the tragic circumstances of his own fate, have for us an interest so poignant as his little masterpiece "La Chevelure," which I present here under the above title. In this tale we have at its highest value every quality (except humor) that should enter into such a piece of art—or rather, every quality that we have a right to expect from the Norman master. According to my custom, I have made an almost literal version, dropping only a few lines too realistic for the English reader and not material to the story.—M. M.

What a mystery was this man killed by a thought! To look at him, this demoniac, awakened pain, fear and pity. What strange dream, frightful and deadly, lurked behind that forehead which it had crossed with deep furrows, constantly moving? . . .

The doctor said: "He has terrible fits of madness, and is in truth one of the most singular cases I have ever seen. His insanity is of the erotic and macabre kind; he is a sort of necrophile or lover of death. However, he has written a diary which exposes the disorder of his mind in the clearest possible manner. His madness is there, so to say, palpable. If the thing interests you, you may look it over."

I followed the doctor into his office and he handed me the journal of this wretched man. "Read it," he said, "and you shall tell me your opinion." The paper ran as follows:

* * * * *

Up to my thirty-second year I lived tranquilly, without love. Life appeared to me very simple, very good, and very easy. I was rich. My tastes were so varied that I could not experience a passion for anything. It is good to live. I awoke happy every morning to do the things that pleased me, and I lay down at night satisfied, with a peaceful hope of the morrow and of a future without care. I had had some love affairs, without ever having felt my heart maddened with desire or my soul wounded with love—*after* possession. It is good to live thus. It is better to love, but terrible. So those who love like most people ought to enjoy an ardent happiness, less than mine perhaps; for love came to find me in an incredible manner.

Being rich, I was a collector. I collected rare old furniture and other ancient things; and often I thought of the unknown hands which had touched these objects, of the eyes which had admired them, of the hearts which had loved them,—for one does love *things*. Often I stood during hours and hours gazing on a little watch of the last century. It was so delicate and pretty with its enamel and its chiseled gold. And it was going still as on the day a woman had purchased it in a ravishing desire to possess this exquisite jewel. It had not ceased to palpitate, to live its mechanical life, and always it continued its regular tick, tick, after a hundred years. . . . Who, then, had first carried it on her bosom in the warmth of the silk and lace, the heart of the watch beating against the heart of the woman? What hand had held it at the end of fingers a little warm, had turned it, reversed it, then had wiped the porcelain shepherds, tarnished a second by the moisture of the flesh? What eyes had watched this flowered dial for the awaited hour, the cherished hour, the hour divine! How I should have wished to know her, to see her, the woman who had chosen this exquisite rare object! She is dead! I am possessed by desire for the women of other times; I love, from afar, all those who have loved; the history of past tendernesses fills my heart with regret. Oh, the beauty, the smiles, the hopes, the young caresses—should not all that be eternal! How I have wept whole nights over the poor women of the past, so beautiful, so tender, so sweet, whose arms opened for the kiss, and who are dead! The kiss is immortal—the kiss! It goes from lip to lip, from century to century, from age to age. Men receive it, give it in their turn, and die.

The past attracts me, the present frightens me, because the future is Death. I regret all that has happened; I lament all those who have lived; I should wish to stop time, to arrest the hour. But it goes, it flies, it passes; from second to second it snatches away a little of me for the nothingness of to-morrow. And I shall never live again. Adieu, ye women of the past—I love you! But I am not to be pitied. I found her,—*Her* for whom I had waited long; and I tasted through her ineffable joys. . . .

I was strolling about Paris one sunny morning, light of heart and foot, looking in the shop windows with the vague interest of a stroller. Suddenly, at an antique furniture dealer's, I caught sight of an Italian cabinet of the Seventeenth Century. It was very beautiful, very rare. I attributed it to a Venetian artist, Vitelli, who was celebrated in that epoch. Then I passed on.

Why did the remembrance of this piece of furniture pursue me with such force that I returned on my steps? Again I stopped before the shop in order to examine it again, and I felt that it was tempting me. What a strange thing such a temptation is! You look at an object, and little by little it seduces you, troubles you, invades you, as might a woman's face. Its charm seizes you, a strange charm that comes from its form, its color, its physiognomy *as a thing*; and you love it already, you desire it, you *want* it. A need of possession fastens upon you, a soft need at first, as if timid, but which grows and becomes violent—irresistible. The dealers seem to divine from your glance this secret, increasing desire.

I purchased this cabinet and I had it taken to my house at once. I placed it in my bed-room. Oh, I pity those

who know not the honeymoon of the collector with the bibelot he has just bought. You caress it with eye and hand, as if it were flesh; you come back to it every minute, you think of it always, wherever you may go, whatever you may do. Its beloved memory follows you in the street, in the world, everywhere; and when you return home, even before taking off hat and gloves, you go to contemplate it with the tenderness of a lover. Truly, during eight days I adored this cabinet. I was constantly opening its doors and drawers; I was handling it with ravishment, tasting all the secret joys of possession.

Now, one evening, while feeling the thickness of a panel, I perceived that there ought to be a hidden drawer behind it. My heart began to beat wildly, and I passed the night seeking vainly to discover the secret. I succeeded next day by inserting a knife-blade in a crack of the wood. A panel opened, and I saw, spread out on a black velvet cushion, a marvelous coil of woman's hair! Yes, a woman's hair, an enormous mat of auburn hair, almost red, which had been cut off close to the skin and tied with a gold cord. I stood there trembling, stupefied, troubled. An almost insensible perfume, so old that it seemed but the soul of an odor,—stole out from this mysterious drawer, this surprising relic.

I took it out softly, almost religiously, and I drew it from its hiding place. At once it uncoiled, spreading its golden wave, which fell to the floor, thick and light, supple and shining as the fiery tail of a comet.

A strange emotion seized me. What was this? When, how, why had this hair been shut up in this cabinet? What adventure, what drama lay hidden in this souvenir?

Who had cut it off? A lover, on a day of adieu? A husband, on a day of vengeance? Or perhaps she whose it was, on a day of despair? Was it on entering a cloister that she had thrown there this fortune of love, like a pledge left to the world of the living? Was it on closing the tomb upon her, the young and beautiful dead, that he who had adored her had kept the crown of her hair, the only thing he could preserve of her, the only living part of her body which would not decay, the one thing which he could still love and caress, and kiss in his transports of grief? Was it not strange that this hair should have remained thus, while there was not left a particle of the body with which she had been born?

It flowed over my fingers, it tickled my flesh with a singular caress,—*the caress of one dead!* I felt softened, as if I were going to weep. I kept it in my hands a long time, a long time; then it seemed to me as if something of the soul had remained hidden within it. I put it back on the velvet cushion tarnished by time; I closed the drawer and shut up the cabinet; and I went away through the streets like a man in a dream. . . .

I was going straight on, full of sadness, and also full of trouble,—of that trouble that remains in your heart after the first love-kiss. It seemed to me that I had already lived, in the past, and that I must have known this woman. And Villon's verses rose to my lips, as a sob rises:

Tell me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora, the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,
Neither of them the fairer woman?

Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

When I had returned to my house I felt an irresistible desire to see again my strange treasure-trove. I took it out and I experienced, on touching it, a long shiver that ran through all my members. During some days, notwithstanding, I remained my ordinary self, although the living thought of the *hair* never left me. As soon as I came in I had to see it and handle it. I turned the key of my cabinet with that shiver one feels on opening the door of the well-beloved, for I had in hands and heart a confused need, singular, constant and sensual, of dipping my fingers in this charming stream of dead hair.

Then, when I had finished caressing it, when I had re-locked the cabinet, *I felt it there always*, as if *It* had been a living being, hidden and prisoner; *I felt it there* and I desired it still. Again I experienced the imperious need of taking it up anew, of feeling it, of enervating myself even to sickness by this cold and slippery contact, this irritating, maddening and delicious embrace.

I lived thus a month or two . . . I know no more. It obsessed me—haunted me. I was at once happy and tortured, as in the expectation of love,—as after the avowals which precede the embrace. I shut myself up alone with it in order to feel it on my flesh,—in order to kiss it, to bite it. I twined it around my face. I drowned my eyes in its golden wave that I might see the yellow light through it.

I loved it! Yes, I loved it. I could not live without it nor be an hour without seeing it. And I awaited . . . I awaited . . . what? I know not . . . *Her!*

One night I awoke with the thought that I was not alone in the room. Alone I was, notwithstanding. But I could not get to sleep again, and as I was worrying myself into a fever of insomnia, I got up in order to go and touch the *Hair*. It seemed to me softer and sweeter than usual; more animated. Do the dead return? The kisses with which I warmed it made me almost faint with happiness. I carried it into my bed, and I lay down, pressing it to my lips like a beloved one! . . . The dead *do* return! *She* came. Yes, I saw her, I held her, I had her, such as she was living, in the past: tall, blonde, voluptuous, her bosoms cold, her hips lyre-shaped; and I overran with my caress that divine sinuous line which runs from the throat to the feet, following all the curves of the flesh.

Yes, I had her, every day, every night! She returned, the Dead, the beautiful Dead, the Adorable, the Mysterious, the Unknown, every night. . . . My happiness was so great that I could not hide it. Near *Her* I felt a superhuman ravishment, the profound, inexplicable joy of possessing the Unseizable, the Invisible, the Dead! No lover ever tasted joys more ardent, more terrible. . . .

But I knew not how to hide my happiness. I loved her so much that I never wished to leave her. I took her with me always,—everywhere. I promenaded her about the city as my wife and showed her off at the theatres as my mistress. But they saw her . . . they suspected . . . they took her from me . . . and they threw me into

prison like a malefactor. They took *Her* from me . . .
oh, misery! . . .

* * * * *

There the manuscript ended. And suddenly, as I raised frightened eyes toward the doctor, a shriek of impotent fury resounded through the asylum. I stammered, moved by astonishment, horror and pity: "But . . . this hair . . . does it really exist?"

The doctor opened a cabinet full of phials and instruments, and threw to me across the room a long switch of blonde hair, which flew toward me like a golden bird. I trembled at feeling in my hands its light and caressing touch. . . . The doctor rejoined with a shrug:

"The mind of man is capable of anything!"

ROSE

THE two young women have the appearance of being buried under a couch of flowers. They are alone in the immense landau, which is loaded with bouquets, like a giant basket. On the front seat are two white satin hampers full of Nice violets, and on the bearskin which covers their knees a heap of roses, gilliflowers, daisies, tuberoses and orange flowers, seems to crush the two delicate bodies. From this dazzling, perfumed bed emerge to view only the shoulders, the arms and a little of the corsages, one of which is blue and the other lilac.

The coachman's whip carries a scabbard of anemones, the reins are entwined with wall-flowers, the spokes of the wheels are covered with mignonette; and in place of lanterns, two round, enormous bouquets seem like the two strange eyes of this rolling and flowery creature.

Rapidly the landau drives along the route, the Rue d'Antibes, preceded, followed and accompanied by a crowd of other garlanded carriages full of women buried under violets. For it is the Flower Fête at Cannes.

They arrive at the Boulevard de la Foncière where the battle takes place. All along the great avenue a double line of gaily festooned equipages goes and returns like an endless ribbon. From one to another the occupants fling flowers which pass in the air like balls, lightly strike

the bright faces, rebound and fall into the dust, whence they are picked up again by an army of gamins.

A dense crowd ranged on the sidewalks and, kept in order by mounted police who pass brutally and drive back the curious on foot as if to prevent the poor and common from mingling with the rich and noble,—looks on with noisy satisfaction.

In the carriages people call each other by name, they recognize each other, they shower each other with roses. A turnout filled with pretty women costumed in red like devils, attracts and seduces all eyes. A gentleman who bears a resemblance to portraits of Henry IV launches with joyous ardor an enormous bouquet which he holds by an elastic. Under the menace of a blow, the women hide their eyes and the men lower their heads, but the gracious missile, rapid and docile, describes a curve and returns to its master, who throws it as soon toward a new face.

The two young women with full hands empty their arsenal and receive a hail of bouquets; then after an hour of battle, a little weary at last, they order the coachman to follow the road of the Gulf Juan which skirts the sea.

The sun is sinking behind the Esterel, outlining in black against a background of fire the serrated silhouette of the long mountain. Blue and clear, the calm sea extends to the horizon where it mingles itself with the heaven, and the squadron at anchor in the midst of the gulf has the fantastic air of a troop of monstrous animals, motionless on the water; apocalyptic beasts, armored and

hunchbacked, topped with masts frail as plumes, and with eyes that light up when the night falls.

Reclining under the heavy furs, the young women observe all this languishingly. One says at length:

"How delicious an evening like this is when all seems good! Is it not so, Margot?"

Her companion replied: "Yes, it is good. But yet something is lacking."

"What then? I feel perfectly happy and content. I wish for nothing."

"Yes. You do not think of it. Whatever comfort may satisfy the body, we desire something more always . . . for the heart."

And the other, smiling: "A little love?"

"Yes."

They were silent a moment, looking straight before them. Then she who was called Marguerite murmured: "Without that, life does not seem endurable to me. I must be loved, were it only by a dog. We are all alike in this respect, Simone, whatever you may say for yourself."

"Oh, no, my dear. I should prefer not to be loved at all rather than by any one you please. Do you think it would be agreeable to me, for example, to be loved by—by——"

She sought in her mind by whom she could possibly be loved, her glance exploring the vast landscape. Her eyes having made the round of the horizon, fell on the two brass buttons which shone on the coachman's back, and she rejoined, laughing:—"by my coachman."

Madame Margot scarcely smiled and said in a low

voice: "I assure you that it is very amusing to be loved by a domestic. That has happened to me two or three times. They roll their eyes in such a droll way that you almost die laughing! Naturally the more in love they are the more severe you show yourself; then you dismiss 'hem some fine day on the first pretext, because you would become ridiculous if anybody perceived the thing."

Madame Simone listened, her glance lost before her; at last she spoke.

"No, decidedly, the heart of my coachman or footman would not suffice me. Tell me then how you found out that they loved you."

"I found it out as with other men,—when they became stupid."

"The others do not appear so stupid to me when they love me."

"Idiots, my dear, incapable of chatting, or replying, of understanding the least thing."

"But you . . . how did it seem to you to be loved by a servant? Were you moved . . . flattered?"

"Moved, no; flattered, yes—a little. One is always flattered by a man's love, whatever he may be."

"Oh, come, Margot!"

"Assuredly, my dear. But wait, I will tell you a singular adventure that happened to me. You shall see what curious and confused emotions occur to us in such cases.

"Five years ago this fall, I found myself without a maid. I tried five or six, one after the other, and I was almost in despair of getting a suitable person when I saw an advertisement in a newspaper that a young girl knowing how to sew, to embroider and to dress hair was seeking a place

and would give the best references, etc. She spoke English, besides.

"I wrote to the address indicated and on the following day the person in question presented herself. She was tall enough, thin, a little pale, with a very timid manner. She had handsome black eyes, and a charming complexion; in short, she pleased me at once. I demanded her recommendations. She gave me one in English, for she was just leaving the house of Lady Rymwell, she said, where she had remained ten years.

"The certificate attested that the young girl had given up her place of her own free will, in order to return to France, and that her conduct had been without reproach during her long service, except for a little 'French coquetry.'

"The modest turn of the English phrase made me smile a bit, and I engaged the girl on the spot. The same day she entered my house and took up her duties. Her name was Rose.

"At the end of a month I adored her; she was a find, a pearl, a phenomenon.

"She could dress the hair with infinite taste; she could trim the laces of a hat better than the best modistes, and she was a perfect dressmaker. I was amazed by such talents: never had I been served so well.

"She dressed me rapidly with a surprising lightness of touch. Never did I feel her fingers on my flesh, and nothing is so disagreeable to me as the contact of a maid's hand. I fell presently into habits of excessive laziness, so pleasant it seemed to suffer myself to be clothed from foot to head, from the chemise to the gloves, by this tall,

timid girl, always blushing, who scarcely ever spoke. On leaving my bath, she rubbed me and massaged me while I dozed a little on a couch.

"My dear, I considered her as a friend of inferior condition rather than as a mere domestic.

"Now, early one morning my concierge, with a mysterious air, asked leave to speak to me. I was surprised and I had him come in. He was a very reliable man, an old soldier and former orderly of my husband.

"He seemed embarrassed with what he had to say. Finally he managed to stammer out: 'Madame, the police commissary of the quarter is downstairs.'

"I asked sharply: 'What does he want?'

" 'He wants to search the house.'

"Certainly the police have their uses, but I detest them. I don't regard that as a noble profession. And I rejoined, being as much irritated as outraged by the proceeding: 'Why this search? For what purpose? He shall not enter!'

"The concierge said: 'He pretends that there is a criminal hidden here.'

"This time I was frightened, and I ordered the commissary shown in, so that he might explain the matter. He was a well-bred appearing man, decorated with the Legion of Honor. He apologized, begged pardon, and then affirmed that I had among my servants a convict!

"I was terribly shocked; but I answered that I could vouch for all my people, and I mentioned them in review.

" 'The concierge, Pierre Courtin, old soldier.'

" 'Not he.'

"The coachman, Francois Pingau, a peasant from Champagne, son of a tenant of my father."

"Not he."

"A stableman, also from Champagne, and likewise son of peasants whom I know; besides, the servant whom you have just seen."

"Not he."

"Then, Monsieur, you see, indeed, that you are deceiving yourself."

"Pardon, Madame, I am sure there is no mistake. Now as the matter concerns a most dangerous criminal, will you have the goodness to call in all your people, here before you and me?"

"I resisted at first, then yielded, and I had all my servants come up. The commissary examined them with a single glance and declared: 'They are not all here.'"

"Excuse me, Monsieur, besides these there is only my maid, a young girl, whom you will hardly confound with a convict."

"He demanded: 'Can I see her?'"

"Certainly."

"I rang for Rose, who appeared at once. Hardly had she crossed the threshold when the commissary gave a signal and two men whom I had not seen, hidden behind a door, leaped upon her, seized her hands and tied them with cords."

"I screamed furiously and would have rushed forward to defend her had not the commissary restrained me."

"This *girl*, Madame, is a man called Jean-Nicholas Lecapet, condemned to death in 1879 for murder preceded by violation. His sentence was commuted to life im-

prisonment. He escaped four months ago, and we have been hunting him ever since.'

"I was frantic and confounded, but I did not believe. The commissary went on, laughing:

"'I can give you only one proof . . . his right arm is tattooed.'

"The sleeve was pulled up, and it was true. The policeman added with a certain bad taste: 'Trust to us for the other evidences!'

"And they led away my *filles de chambre*!

"Well, would you believe, what dominated in me at the moment was not anger at having been tricked, deceived and made ridiculous; was not shame at having been dressed, undressed, handled and touched by this man . . . but a . . . profound humiliation . . . a humiliation as a woman, you understand?"

"No, not very well."

"Come now. Consider. He had been condemned for violation, this young man. Well! I was thinking . . . of her whom he violated . . . and that . . . humiliated me. . . . Do you understand now?"

Madame Margot did not reply. She was looking straight before her, with an eye fixed and singular, at the two shining buttons of the coachman's livery; and her features wore that sphinxlike smile which women have sometimes.

THE PRISONER OF MONACO

I SHOULD like to have the leisure to speak at length of this surprising little State, smaller than a French village, where we find an absolute sovereign, some bishops, an army of Jesuits and seminarians more numerous than that of the Prince, an artillery, the cannons of which are almost useless; an etiquette more ceremonious than that of the late Louis XIV; principles of authority more despotic than those of William of Prussia, joined to a magnificent tolerance of the vices of humanity, by which live the Sovereign, the bishops, the Jesuits, the seminarians, the ministers, the army, the magistracy,—all the world!

Let us salute this good, pacific King, who without fear of invasion and revolution, reigns in peace over his happy little people in the midst of the ceremonies of a court which still preserves the tradition of the four reverences, of the twenty-six curtsies, and of all the formulas once used about the Great Rulers. Notwithstanding, this Monarch is neither sanguinary nor vindictive, and when he banishes—for he does banish—the measure is applied with infinite alleviations.

Do you ask a proof of this? . . .

An obstinate gambler, having had a day of ill luck, insulted the Sovereign. He was expelled by decree. Dur-

ing a month he wandered around the forbidden paradise, fearing the sword of the archangel in the form of a gendarme's sabre. One day, finally, he mustered up his courage, crossed the frontier, gained in thirty seconds the heart of the country, and made his way into the Casino. But suddenly a functionary halts him: "Are you not banished, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Monsieur, but I shall start again by the first train."

"Oh! in that case, very well, Monsieur,—you may enter."

And each week he returns; and each week the same functionary puts the same question to him, to which he makes the same answer.

Could justice be more kind?

But not long ago a case very grave and entirely unprecedented arose in the little kingdom. An assassination took place. A man, a Monacan,—not one of those wandering strangers whom you meet by thousands on these coasts,—a husband, in a moment of rage, killed his wife. Oh, he killed her without reason, without acceptable pretext. Horror was universal throughout the principality. The Supreme Court sat in order to judge this exceptional case (never before had an assassination occurred), and the wretch was condemned to death with unanimity. The indignant Sovereign ratified the sentence. It remained only to execute the malefactor.

Then a difficulty arose—the country possessed neither executioner nor guillotine. What was to be done? Upon the advice of the minister of foreign affairs, the Prince opened negotiations with the French Government in order

to obtain the loan of an executioner with his apparatus. Long deliberations ensued in the ministry at Paris. An answer came at last in the shape of a bill of costs for the use of the machine and the operator. The total rose to sixteen thousand francs.

His Monacan majesty thought the operation would cost him pretty dear; the assassin was surely not worth this price. Sixteen thousand francs for the neck of a fool? His majesty guessed not! The same demand was then addressed to the Italian Government. A king, a brother, would, no doubt, show himself less exacting than a republic. The Italian Government sent a statement of costs which amounted to twelve thousand francs. Twelve thousand francs! Why, a new impost would have to be laid, an impost of two francs per capita! That would suffice to bring unknown troubles upon the State!

They thought to have the scoundrel beheaded by a common soldier, but the general, on being consulted, replied, with some hesitation, that his men had not perhaps sufficient practice with the sword in order to perform a task demanding so much skill and experience. Then the Prince again convoked the Supreme Court and submitted to it this embarrassing case.

The Court deliberated a long time without discovering any practical means. Finally the president proposed to commute the punishment of death to imprisonment for life, and the measure was adopted. But there was no prison! The government was obliged to build one, and a jailer was appointed to take charge of the prisoner. During six months all went well. The captive slept all day on a straw cot in his dungeon, and the jailer did the

same, seated in a chair before the door, when he was not watching the passers-by.

But the Prince is economical,—that is his little defect—and he demands an accounting of the smallest expenses in the State—it is not a long list. They gave him the bill of costs relative to the creation of this new function, to the support of the prison, the prisoner and the jailer. The salary of this last weighed heavily upon the Sovereign's budget. He made a grimace, but when he reflected that this thing might last always—the condemned man was young—he notified his minister of justice to take measures to suppress the expense.

The minister consulted the president of the Supreme Court, and both agreed that they would suppress the charge of the jailer. The prisoner, invited to guard himself, alone, would not fail to escape; and this would solve the question to the satisfaction of everybody. The jailer was then sent home to his family, and a kitchen helper from the palace was charged simply to carry morning and evening the criminal's food. But the fellow made no attempt to regain his liberty.

Now, one day, as they had neglected to send his rations, they saw him coming peaceably to claim them, and from that time he took the habit, in order to spare the kitchen helper the trouble of bringing his meals, of going himself at the regular hours to the palace and eating with the servants, with whom he became very friendly. After breakfast he went for a constitutional, as far as Monte Carlo. Sometimes he entered the Casino to risk five francs on the green cloth. When he was in luck, he treated himself to a good dinner at a hotel of reputation;

then he returned to his prison and closed the door carefully from the inside.

He never slept out a single night.

The situation was becoming difficult, not for the condemned man, but for the judges. The Court met again and it was decided to ask the criminal to leave the State of Monaco. When the decree was made known to him, he said simply: "You are very kind, but what is to become of me? I have no means of earning a living. I have no family. What do you expect me to do? I was condemned to death. You did not execute me. I said nothing. I was then sentenced to prison for life and delivered into the hands of a jailer. You took away my keeper. I said nothing even then.

"Now you wish to banish me from the country. Ah, but I guess not! I am a prisoner, your prisoner, judged and condemned by you. I am faithfully paying the penalty. I stay here!"

The Supreme Court was grounded. The Prince fell into a terrible rage, and ordered that decisive measures be taken. The Court resumed its deliberations.

Then it was decided to offer the criminal a pension of six hundred francs, to go and live in some foreign land. He accepted the proposition.

He rented a patch of ground at the distance of a five-minutes' walk from the State of his former Sovereign, and he lives, happy, upon his land, cultivating a few vegetables and despising all potentates. You may see in the judicial archives of the principality the decree fixing the pension of this fellow, on condition that he leave the Monacan territory.

A LEGEND OF MOUNT ST. MICHAEL

I HAD first seen, from Cancale, that fairy château planted in the sea. I had seen it confusedly, a gray shadow risen against the misty sky. Again I saw it from Avranches in the sunset. The wide sands were red, the horizon was red, all the immense bay was red: alone, the steep abbey towering down there far from the land, like a fantastic manor-house, amazing as a dream palace, incredibly strange and beautiful, stood out almost black in the purple of the dying day.

I went toward it at dawn across the sands, my eyes fixed upon that monstrous jewel, huge as a mountain, carved like a cameo, and vaporous as a lace. The nearer I approached it the more I felt myself transported with admiration, for nothing in the world perhaps is more astonishing and more perfect.

Surprised, as if I had discovered the habitation of a God, I wandered through those halls supported by columns light or heavy, through corridors open to the day, raising my astonished eyes to those spires which seem as it were rockets started toward heaven—to all that amazing confusion of towers, gargoyles, ornaments graceful and charming, fireworks of stone, lace of granite,—a masterpiece of architecture at once delicate and colossal.

As I stood in ecstasy a Low-Norman peasant ap-

proached me and related for my edification the story of the great quarrel between St. Michael and the Devil.

A skeptic of genius has said: "God made man in His own image, but man has fully returned the compliment."

This is an eternal truth, and it would be very curious to make in each country the history of the local divinity, as well as the history of patron saints in each of our provinces. The negro has ferocious idols, devourers of men; the polygamous Mohammedan peoples his paradise with women; the Greeks, like a practical people, have deified all the passions.

Every village in France is placed under the tutelage of a patron saint, modified according to the character of the inhabitants.

Saint Michael watches over Low Normandy,—Saint Michael, the radiant and victorious Archangel, the sword-bearer, the triumphant hero of Heaven, the conqueror of Satan.

Let us see how the Low-Norman, crafty, cautious, sly and tricky, conceives and relates the battle of the great Saint with the Devil.

St. Michael, in order to protect himself against the evil designs of the Wicked One, built for himself, right in the ocean, this habitation fit for an Archangel; and indeed only so great a saint was able to make himself such a residence. But, as he still feared the approaches of the Devil, he surrounded his domain with shifty sands more treacherous than the sea.

The Devil lived in a humble straw-thatched cottage on the coast; but he possessed the prairies bathed with salt

water, the lovely fat lands that bear heavy harvests, the rich valleys and the fertile hills of all the country; while the Saint reigned only over the sands. So that Satan was rich, and St. Michael as poor as a church rat.

After some lean years, the Saint became weary of this state of affairs and he thought to make a compromise with the Devil; but the thing was not too easy, Satan holding to his harvests.

He reflected during six months; then, one morning, he traveled toward the land. The Devil was eating his soup before the door when he perceived the Saint. Instantly he hastened to meet him, kissed the hem of his sleeve, made him come in and offered him some refreshment.

After having drunk a bowl of milk, St. Michael opened the business.

"I have come to make you a good offer."

The Devil, candid and without mistrust, answered, "Nothing would please me better."

"Here it is. You shall lease me all your lands."

Satan, disturbed, wished to speak: "But——"

The Saint interrupted: "Hear me first. You shall lease me all your lands. I shall charge myself with the maintenance, the work, the tillage, the planting, the fertilizing, in short, everything, and we shall share the harvest equally. Is it a bargain?"

The Devil, naturally lazy, accepted. He demanded only, to boot, some of those delicious grey mullet which abound near the solitary Mount. St. Michael promised the fish.

They shook hands on it and spat on the side in order to indicate that the bargain was closed. Then the Saint

added: "A moment. I don't wish that you should have the least complaint to make of me. Choose which you prefer—the part of the harvest which shall be *on the earth*, or that which shall remain *in the earth*."

Satan said: "I take that which shall be on the earth."

"It is settled," said the Saint. And he went away.

Now, six months after, in the Devil's immense domain, one saw only carrots, turnips, onions, salsifi, all the plants whose fat roots are good and savorous and whose useless leaf serves at best to feed the cattle.

Satan had nothing and wished to break the contract, declaring that St. Michael had cheated him. But the Saint had acquired a taste for farming; he returned presently to see the Devil.

"I assure you that I had no idea that it would turn out so; it just happened like that and through no malice of mine. Now, in order to square things, I offer you this year all that shall be *under the earth*."

"That suits me perfectly," said Satan.

Now the next Spring the whole extent of the Devil's land was covered with fat wheat, with oats as large as your thumb, with flax, with magnificent colza, with red clover, with peas, cabbage, artichoke—in a word, with all that flourishes in the sun, either grains or fruits.

Satan had nothing again, and this time he gave full vent to his wrath. He reclaimed his land and his tillage and remained deaf to all the new overtures of his neighbor.

A whole year passed away. St. Michael, from the top of his isolated castle, gazed upon the distant and fertile lands, and saw the Devil directing the works, bring-

ing in the harvests, threshing his grains. And he saw all this, raging, exasperated at his own impotence. Not being able to dupe Satan further, he resolved to take vengeance on him; and he went to invite him to dinner for the following Sunday.

"You've not been lucky in your affairs with me," he said. "I know it, but I don't want any hard feelings to stand between us, and I request that you will come and dine with me. I will not send you away fasting."

Satan, as great a glutton as an idler, accepted at once. On the day appointed he put on his best clothes and took the road to the Mount.

St. Michael made him sit down to a magnificent table. First was served a *vol-au-vent* full of cock's combs and crests; then sausages, then two large grey mullet in cream, then a white turkey-hen, stuffed with chestnuts preserved in wine; then a leg of choice lamb, tender as a cake; then some vegetables which melted in the mouth, and some piping hot biscuits which exhaled a perfume of butter.

They drank pure cider, foaming and sweet, also wine red and intoxicating; and after each dish they "made a hole" with some old apple brandy.

The Devil ate and drank like ten men, so that presently he was obliged, without ceremony, to relieve himself.

Then St. Michael, rising formidable, cried in a voice of thunder: "Scoundrel! You dare—before me——!"

Satan, desperate, took to flight, and the Saint, seizing a stick, pursued him.

They ran through the lower halls, bolting around pillars helter-skelter, they mounted the airy staircases, they

galloped along cornices, they leaped from gargoyle to gargoyle. The poor Devil, sick as a dog, fled, soiling as he went the grand habitation of the Saint. At length he found himself on the last terrace, very high up, whence you can see the immense bay with its distant cities, its coasts and pasture lands. He could no longer escape, and the Saint, giving him a furious kick in the behind, launched him like a ball through space.

Down the sky he fell like a javelin and landed heavily before the city of Mortain. The horns of his forehead and the claws of his hands and feet sank deep into the rock, which keeps for eternity the traces of this fall of Satan.

He rose limping, crippled until the end of time; and regarding far off the fatal Mount erected like a peak in the setting sun, he understood that he would always be conquered in this unequal struggle. Then he started, dragging one leg after him, directing his course toward distant countries; abandoning to his Enemy his fields, his hills, his valleys and his meadows.

Behold how St. Michael, patron of Normans, conquered the Devil!

Another people would have imagined a different version of this duel.

HAPPINESS

It was the hour for tea, before the lamps were lighted. The villa overlooked the sea; the sun having set, had left the sky all red from its passage, sparkling here and there as with gold-dust, and the Mediterranean, without a wrinkle, without a surge, smooth, shining still in the fading light, seemed like a polished and unbounded mirror. In the distance, on the right, the serrated mountains threw their black profile upon the pale purple of the sunset.

The company were talking of love; they were discussing this old subject; they were saying over again what they had already said very often. The tender melancholy of the twilight softened their speech, awakening an emotion in their souls; and this word "love" which recurred constantly, now uttered by a man's strong voice, now spoken in the lighter tone of a woman, seemed to fill the drawing-room, to fly there like a bird, to hover there like a spirit.

Can one love during many succeeding years?

Yes, affirmed some. No, asserted others.

And they began to distinguish cases, to mark exceptions, to cite examples. All of them, men and women, full of insurgent, troubling memories, of which they could not speak and which rose unbidden to their lips, were deeply

moved whilst they talked of this thing so common yet so supreme, the tender and mysterious accord of two beings, with a profound emotion and an ardent interest.

Suddenly some one, with eyes fixed on the distance, cried out:

“Oh! look down there:—what is that?”

On the sea, at the verge of the horizon, a gray mass was rising; enormous and confused in outline.

The women left their seats and came forward to behold this surprising thing, which they had never seen before.

Somebody said: “It is Corsica! You can see it thus two or three times a year under certain atmospheric conditions, when the air, of a perfect limpidity, does not hide it with those vapory mists which always veil the distance.”

They distinguished vaguely the hills, they thought they could pick out the snowy summits. And all were surprised, troubled, almost frightened by this startling apparition of a world, this phantom risen from the sea.

Perhaps *they* also had seen these strange visions—they who voyaged, like Columbus, across oceans unexplored.

Then an old gentleman, who had not yet spoken, said: “Listen, my friends, I found in this island which rises before us, as if to answer itself to what we were saying and to recall to me a strange memory,—I found there an admirable example of a constant love, incredibly happy. Here is the story:

“Five years ago I made a voyage to Corsica. This

barbarous island is more unknown to us and more remote than America, although one may sometimes see it from the coast of France, as to-day.

"Imagine a world still in chaos, a tempest of mountains separated by narrow ravines through which the torrents roll; not a plain, but immense waves of granite, of earth covered with thickets or dense forests of chestnut and pine. It is a virgin soil, uncultivated, deserted, although sometimes one perceives a village like a heap of rocks on top of a mountain. No tillage, no industry, no art. One never comes upon a piece of fashioned wood, a bit of sculptured stone; never a hint of taste, crude or refined, on the part of ancestors for things gracious and beautiful. That it is which strikes one most in this hard, superb country—the hereditary indifference toward that quest of beautiful things which we call Art.

"Italy, where each palace filled with masterpieces is itself a masterpiece, where the marble, the wood, the bronze, the iron, the metals and the stones attest the genius of men, where the smallest ancient things remaining in old houses reveal this divine care for beauty,—Italy is for us all a sacred fatherland which we love because it shows us and proves to us the effort, the grandeur, the power, and the triumph of creative intelligence.

"And yet, directly facing it, Corsica has remained as barbarous as in her first days. Man lives there in his sordid cabin, indifferent to all that does not touch his existence itself or his family quarrels. He has remained with the qualities and the defects of uncultured races; violent, malignant, unconsciously bloody-minded, but also hospitable, generous, devoted, simple; opening his door

to the wayfarer and giving his faithful friendship for the least mark of sympathy.

"Well, during a month I wandered through this magnificent isle with the feeling that I was at the end of the world. No inns, no taverns, no roads. By mule-paths you climb to hamlets fastened to the side of mountains, which overhang the tortuous abysses whence arises at night to your ear the hollow, profound voice of the torrent. You knock at a house door, you ask a night's lodging and enough food until the morrow. You sit down at the humble table and you sleep under the humble roof; and in the morning you shake hands with your host, who conducts you to the outskirts of the village.

"One evening after a ten-hours' march, I reached a little house standing alone at the bottom of a narrow valley which a league farther on ended in the sea. The two steep sides of the mountain, covered with brushwood, with heaped-up rocks and trees, shut in like two somber walls this sad and gloomy ravine.

"Around this cottage some vines, a little garden, and farther off, some great chestnut trees,—in a word, enough to live on, a fortune for that poor country.

"The woman who received me was old, severe looking, and exceptionally neat. The man, seated on a straw chair, rose to salute me, then sat down again without speaking a word. His companion said: 'Excuse him; he is deaf now. He is eighty-two years old.'

"She spoke pure French; I was surprised.

"I asked her: 'You are not of Corsica?'

"She replied, 'No, we are continentals. But we have lived here fifty years.'

"A sensation of anguish and fear seized me at the thought of those fifty years far from the joyous cities where men live. At this moment an old shepherd entered, and we sat down to the single dish of which the meal consisted,—a thick soup, a stew of potatoes, bacon and cabbage.

"When the short meal was finished I went to sit outside the door, my heart oppressed by the melancholy of the sad landscape, by that distress which sometimes weighs upon travelers on certain sad evenings, in certain desolate places. It seems at such times that all is about to end, life itself and the universe. One suddenly perceives, as never before, the frightful misery of life, the isolation of all beings, the nothingness of everything, and the black solitude of the heart which lulls and deceives itself with dreams, even unto death.

"The old woman joined me and, tortured by that curiosity which lives always at the bottom of the most resigned souls, she asked: 'Then you come from France?'

" 'Yes, I am traveling for pleasure.'

" 'You are from Paris, perhaps?'

" 'No, I am from Nancy.'

"It seemed to me that a deep emotion seized her at these words. How I saw or felt that I cannot tell. She repeated in a hesitant voice:

" 'You are from Nancy!'

"The man appeared in the doorway; impassive as the deaf always are. She said: 'Don't mind him: he hears nothing.'

"Then, after waiting a few seconds:

" 'So you know people at Nancy?'

" 'Yes, almost everybody there.'

" 'The Sainte-Allaize family?'

" 'Yes, very well; they were friends of my father.'

" 'May I ask your name?'

" 'I told it. She looked fixedly at me; then said in that low voice which memories awaken:

" 'Oh, yes, I recall it well. And the Brisemares, what is become of them?'

" 'All dead.'

" 'Ah! and the Sirmonts, did you know them?'

" 'Yes, the last is now a general.'

" Then she said, trembling with emotion, with anguish, with I know not what confused sentiment, sacred and powerful, with I know not what need of confessing, of telling all, of speaking about those things which until then she had held shut up at the bottom of her heart, and of those people whose name overwhelmed her soul:

" 'Yes, Henri de Sirmont, I know him well, indeed—he is my brother!'

" 'I looked at her, almost frightened with surprise. And all at once I remembered.

" 'There had been long ago a great scandal in proud Lorraine. A young girl, rich and beautiful, Suzanne de Sirmont, had been carried off by a sub-officer of a regiment of hussars which her father commanded. He was a handsome fellow, the son of peasants, wearing gracefully the blue hussar's jacket, this soldier who had taken the fancy of his colonel's daughter. She had seen him, remarked him, and loved him no doubt whilst watching the squadrons on parade. But how had she spoken to him, how had they managed to see and understand each other?

How had she dared to let him know that she loved him? All that was never known. Nobody had divined or suspected anything. One night, when the soldier was off duty, he disappeared with her. A search was made; they were not found. Nothing was ever heard of them and they were believed to be dead.

"And I had re-discovered her in this gloomy valley! . . .

"Then, in my turn, I spoke: 'Yes, I remember perfectly; you are Mademoiselle Suzanne.'

"She nodded 'Yes,' with tears falling from her eyes. Then glancing toward the old man, motionless on the door-sill, she said: 'It is he!'

"And I understood that she loved him always, that always she saw him with her fascinated eyes.

"I asked: 'Have you been happy, at least?'

"She replied in a voice that came from the heart: 'Oh, yes! very happy. He has made me very happy. I have never regretted anything.'

"Sad, surprised, astounded by the power of love, I gazed upon her. This rich girl had followed this poor man, this peasant. She had given herself to his life without charm, without luxury, without refinement or delicacy of any sort; she had adapted herself to his simple habits. And she loved him still. She had become a rustic hind's wife, in straw bonnet and coarse petticoat. Seated on a straw chair, she ate from an earthen dish on a rough, wooden table, a stew of potatoes, cabbage and bacon. She lay on a straw pallet at his side.

"She had never thought of anything but him! She had not regretted either diamonds or necklaces, either rich

dresses or luxuries, either the softness of upholstered divans or the perfumed warmth of chambers hung with tapestries, or the comfort and repose of downy beds. She had never needed anyone or anything but him; provided that he was there, she desired nothing.

"She had abandoned life, very young, and the world, and those who had brought her up and loved her. She had come, alone with him, to this wild ravine. And he had been all for her,—all that one desires, all that one dreams of, all that one constantly expects, all that one hopes for without end. He had filled her life with happiness from one end to the other. She could not have been more happy.

"And all the night through, whilst hearing the raucous breathing of the old soldier stretched on his pallet beside her who had followed him so far, I kept thinking of this strange and simple romance, of this happiness so complete, yet made up of so little. At daybreak I shook hands with the old couple and went my way."

The speaker ended. A woman remarked: "All the same, her ideal was too facile, her needs too primitive and her requirements too simple. She must have been a fool."

Another said dreamily, "Ah! what does it matter?—she was happy!" . . .

And down there, at the verge of the horizon, Corsica was sinking in the night, slowly returning into the sea, effacing her immense shadow which had appeared as if she would herself relate the story of the two humble lovers sheltered by her shore.

A PIECE OF STRING

ON all the roads around Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming toward the town, for it was market day. The men plodded along stolidly, throwing the body forward at each movement of their long crooked legs. They were deformed by hard work, by pushing the plough, which hoists the left shoulder and spoils a man's figure; by cutting the wheat, which makes a man throw out his knees in order to get a solid purchase for swinging the scythe; by all the slow and painful labors of the country. Their blue blouses, starched and shiny, with a bit of imitation lace at collar and wristbands, were puffed out around their bony torsos, and seemed not unlike balloons ready to fly away, from each of which a head, two arms and two feet issued.

Some led a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. Their wives, behind the animal, whipped it with a leafy branch in order to hasten its gait. Some women carried on their arms large baskets from which hens stuck out their heads here and ducks there. They marched with a shorter, quicker step than the men, their straight, stiff figures draped in a little skimpy shawl pinned on their flat chests; their heads enveloped with a linen scarf fastened upon the hair and surmounted with a bonnet.

From time to time a pleasure wagon passed, drawn by a nag at a jerky trot which shook strangely two men seated side by side and a woman in the body of the vehicle, who

held onto the sides with all her might, so as to soften the hard jolts.

There was a crowd on the square at Goderville, a swarm of men and beasts mingled. The horns of cattle, the tall, long-napped hats of rich peasants and the headdresses of peasant women emerged at the surface of the assembly. And the loud voices, strong or piercing, made a continuous wild clamor above which sometimes rose a burst of laughter from the robust lungs of some gay countryman, or the long bellowing of a cow tied to a house wall near by.

All this smelt of the stable, the milk and the dung, the hay and the sweat—threw off that rank odor, human and bestial, peculiar to the people of the fields.

Maître Hauchecorne of Bréaute had just arrived at Goderville and he was going toward the market square when he saw on the ground near him a little piece of string or twine. Thrifty like a true Norman, Maître Hauchecorne thought that anything useful was good enough to pick up; and he bent down painfully, for he was suffering from rheumatism. He picked up the bit of thin cord and he was about to roll it up carefully when he chanced to remark the harness-maker, Maître Malandain, standing in his doorway and watching him. They had had some trouble over a halter formerly, and being both vindictive, there was bad blood still between them.

Maître Hauchecorne was seized with a sort of shame at being seen thus by his enemy, picking out of the mud a bit of twine. He had his find quickly under his blouse, then in the pocket of his pantaloons. Then he made a feint of still searching on the ground for something which he could not find; and soon he went away towards the

market, his head thrust forward and his body bent in two from his rheumatic pains.

He was lost at once in the slow, noisy crowd, agitated by innumerable chafferings. The peasants tapped the cows here and there, went away, came back, perplexed; always in fear of being overreached, never daring to decide, watching the seller's eye, obstinately seeking to detect the man's ruse and the animal's defect.

The women, having placed their big baskets on the ground, had taken out their fowl, which now lay on the ground tied by the feet, with frightened eyes and scarlet combs. They received bids and held to their price, with dry manner and unchanged expression, or presently making up their minds to yield a point, cried out to a customer departing slowly: "All right, Maître Anthime. You may have it."

Then, little by little, the square was cleared and the *Angelus* tolling noon, those who lived too far away repaired to the village taverns.

At Jourdain's the large dining room was crowded with people, as the immense yard was filled with vehicles of every kind, wagons, cabs, carryalls, tilburies, etc., yellow with mud, damaged, mended, raising their thrills to heaven like two imploring arms, or with nose in the ground and behind in the air.

Close up to the diners at table, the immense chimney, full of bright flame, threw a strong heat into the backs of the right line. Three spits were turning, loaded with poultry, pigeons and legs of mutton; and a delicious odor of meat cooking and of gravy trickling over the browned

roast arose from the hearth, moving every one to gayety causing all mouths to water.

All the aristocracy of the plough was eating there at Maître Jourdain's, tavern-keeper and horse-dealer, a crafty fellow who had made money.

The plates were passed and emptied like pitchers of yellow cider. Everyone was telling about his affairs, his purchases and his sales. They were asking about the harvests. The weather was good for the green crops but a little moist for the wheat.

Suddenly the rattle of a drum sounded in the yard before the house. Everybody was up in a moment, excepting some indifferent persons, and ran to the door, to windows, with mouth still full and napkin in hand.

Having finished his drum-call the town crier delivered the following in a jerky voice, scanning his phrases out of time:

"Hear ye! hear ye! It is hereby proclaimed to the inhabitants of Goderville, and generally to all—the persons present at the fair—that there was lost this morning on the Beuzeville road, between—nine and ten o'clock, a black leather pocket-book containing five hundred francs and some business papers. You are requested to bring it—to the Mayor's Office, at once, or to the house of Maître Fortuné Houlbrèque, of Manneville. A reward of twenty francs will be paid."

Then the man went away. Once more, at a distance, was heard the dull beating of the drum and the voice, grown fainter, or the crier.

Then all began to talk of this event, at the same time

discussing Maître Houlbrèque's chances of recovering his money. And the dinner proceeded.

They were finishing with the coffee when the brigadier of gendarmes appeared at the door. He demanded: "Maître Hauchecorne of Bréaute—is he here?"

Maître Hauchecorne, seated at the far end of the table, answered, "Here I am."

The brigadier said: "Maître Hauchecorne will you have the kindness to accompany me to the Mayor's Office?—the Mayor would like to speak to you."

The peasant, surprised, uneasy, swallowed his demitasse, rose and even more bent than in the morning—for the first steps after each repose were particularly difficult—started toward the door, repeating: "I'm coming; I'm coming." And he followed the brigadier.

Seated in an easy chair, the Mayor awaited him. He was also the notary of the place, a fat man, grave and given to pompous phrases.—"Maître Hauchecorne," he said, "you were seen to pick up this morning on the Beuzeville road the pocketbook lost by Maître Houlbrèque of Manneville."

The countryman, speechless, stared at the Mayor, sickened already by this suspicion which rested upon him, without his understanding why.

"I . . . I . . . I picked up this pocketbook?"

"Yes, you yourself."

"Word of honor, I know nothing about it."

"You were seen."

"I was seen, eh? Who saw me?"

"Maître Malandain, the harness-maker."

Then the old man recalled the morning's incident, understood, and reddening with anger, cried out:

"Ah! he saw me, that scoundrel! He saw me pick up this little piece of string—look, Mr. Mayor!"

And searching his pocket, he drew out the bit of cord.

But the official, incredulous, shook his head. "You will not make me believe, Maître Hauchecorne, that Maître Malandain, who is a man worthy of belief, has taken this piece of string for a pocketbook."

The peasant, now furious, raised his right hand, spat on the side, in order to attest his honor, repeating:

"Notwithstanding, it is the good God's truth, the holy truth Mr. Mayor. There upon my soul and upon my salvation, I swear it."

The Mayor continued: "After picking up the object, you went on searching in the mud a long time, as if some piece of money had escaped you."

By this time the peasant was suffocating with rage and fear. "Such lies! such lies!—how could anybody make up such stories to blacken an honest man!"

But his protests were in vain; he was not believed.

He was confronted with Maître Malandain, who repeated and sustained his affirmation. During an hour they insulted each other. Upon Maître Hauchecorne's demand, he was searched. They found nothing upon him.

Finally the Mayor, much perplexed, sent him away, forewarning him that he would advise with the magistrates in regard to further proceedings.

The news spread everywhere. On leaving the Mayor's Office, the old man was surrounded and interrogated with a serious or mocking curiosity, but in which no anger

entered. And again he began to relate the story of the little piece of string. They did not believe him. They were laughing! . . .

He went away, stopped by all, holding up his acquaintances, recommencing without end his story and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out, in order to prove his innocence. They only said to him: "Go on, you old fox!"

And he lost his temper, became angry and exasperated, feverish and heart-broken at not being believed; not knowing what to do, and always telling his story.

The night came on. He had to return home. He set out with three neighbors to whom he showed the place where he had picked up the bit of twine; and during all the way he talked of his adventure.

Next day he made the rounds of his own village, telling it to everybody. He encountered only the unbelieving. He was sick from it all night.

The following day, toward one o'clock in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle, farm laborer employed by Maître Breton, farmer at Ymauville, delivered the wallet and its contents to Maître Houlbrèque of Manneville. This man claimed to have found the pocketbook on the road, but as he could not read, he had brought it to the house and given it to his employer.

The news spread throughout the neighborhood. Maître Hauchecorne was told of the find. At once he started on his rounds and began relating his story, now completed by its denouement. He was triumphant in his re-established honesty.

"What made me feel bad," he said, "was not so much the thing, you understand, but the lie. Nothing hurts you like being condemned on account of a lie."

All day he spoke of his adventure; he told it along the roads to passers-by, at the tavern to people drinking, after church on the following Sunday. He even stopped people unknown to him in order to tell it to them. Now his mind was at peace and yet something troubled him, tho he knew not exactly what it was. People has a jocose air in listening to his tale. They did not seem convinced. It seemed to him that they were talking behind his back.

On Wednesday of the week following the loss, he betook himself to the fair at Goderville, strongly urged by the need of explaining his case.

Malandain, standing at his door, began to laugh maliciously on seeing him pass. Why?

He went up to speak to a farmer from Criquetot, who would not let him finish but fetching him a dig in the ribs, cried, "Get away with you, old fox!" Then he turned his back on him.

Maitre Hauchecorne stood speechless and grew more and more disturbed in his mind. Why had they called him "old fox"?

Maitre Hauchecorne stood spechless and grew more and more disturbed in his mind. Why had they called him "old fox"?

When he was seated at table in Jourdain's tavern he resumed his explanations of the affair. A horse-dealer from Montivilliers threw in his face: "Oh come, let up, let up, old sharper. I know all about your little piece of string!"

Hauchecorne stammered: "But didn't they recover it . . . the pocket-book?"

The other replied: "Give us a rest, old screw. It takes one to find and one to bring back. Nothing seen, nothing known, eh? . . . ha! ha!"

The peasant fell back in his chair, astounded. At last he understood. They were accusing him of having had the wallet brought back by an accomplice.

He wanted to protest and all the table burst into a roar. He could not finish his dinner and went away in the midst of mockeries.

He returned to his house, ashamed and indignant, strangling with rage, with confusion, the more chagrined that he knew himself quite capable, with his Norman cunning, of doing the thing he was accused of, and even of bragging about it as a clever ruse. His innocence now seemed to him impossible to prove, his cunning being so well known. And he felt himself struck to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Then he began anew to relate the adventure, each day lengthening the story, each time he told it adding new reasons, protests more vigorous, oaths more solemn, which he imagined and prepared in his hours of solitude, his mind being solely occupied by the history of the little piece of string. People believed him the less the more complicated his defense and the more subtle his argument.

"A liar's reasons, a liar's reasons, all that," they kept saying behind his back. He felt it and the thing preyed upon him, while he continued to exhaust himself in useless efforts.

He was perishing visibly.

The jokers now made him tell about the "piece of string" for their amusement, as one gets a soldier to talk of the battles he has seen. His mind, deeply stricken, was ever growing weaker.

Toward the end of December he took to his bed. . . .

He died in the first days of January, and in the delirium of his last agony he declared his innocence, repeating:

"A little piece of string . . . a little piece of string . . . see, here it is, Mr. Mayor!"

MADemoiselle FIFI

MAJOR GRAF VON FARLSBERG, the Prussian commandant, was reading his newspaper as he lay back in a great easy-chair, his booted feet on the beautiful marble mantelpiece where his spurs had made two holes, which had worn deeper every day of the three months that he had been in the château of Uville.

A cup of coffee was smoking on a small inlaid table, which was stained with liqueur, burned by cigars, notched by the penknife of the victorious officer, who occasionally would stop while sharpening a pencil, to jot down figures, or to make a drawing on it, just as it took his fancy.

When he had read his letters and the German newspapers, which his orderly had brought him, he got up, and after throwing three or four enormous pieces of green wood on the fire, for these gentlemen were gradually cutting down the park in order to keep themselves warm, he went to the window. The rain was descending in torrents, a regular Normandy rain, which looked as if it were being poured out by some furious person, a slanting rain, opaque as a curtain, which formed a kind of wall with diagonal stripes, and which deluged everything, a rain such as one frequently experiences in the neighborhood of Rouen, which is the watering-pot of France.

For a long time the officer looked at the sodden turf and at the swollen Andelle beyond it, which was overflowing its banks; he was drumming a waltz with his

fingers on the window-panes, when a noise made him turn round. It was his second in command, Captain Baron van Kelweinstein.

The major was a giant, with broad shoulders and a long, fan-like beard, which hung down like a curtain to his chest. His whole solemn person suggested the idea of a military peacock, a peacock who was carrying his tail spread out on his breast. He had cold, gentle blue eyes, and a scar from a sword-cut, which he had received in the war with Austria; he was said to be an honorable man, as well as a brave officer.

The captain, a short, red-faced man, was tightly belted in at the waist, his red hair was cropped quite close to his head, and in certain lights he almost looked as if he had been rubbed over with phosphorus. He had lost two front teeth one night, though he could not quite remember how, and this sometimes made him speak unintelligibly, and he had a bald patch on top of his head surrounded by a fringe of curly, bright golden hair, which made him look like a monk.

The commandant shook hands with him and drank his cup of coffee (the sixth that morning), while he listened to his subordinate's report of what had occurred; and then they both went to the window and declared that it was a very unpleasant outlook. The major, who was a quiet man, with a wife at home, could accommodate himself to everything; but the captain, who led a fast life, who was in the habit of frequenting low resorts, and enjoyed women's society, was angry at having to be shut up for three months in that wretched hole.

There was a knock at the door, and when the commandant said, "Come in," one of the orderlies appeared, and by his mere presence announced that breakfast was ready. In the dining-room they met three other officers

of lower rank—a lieutenant, Otto von Grossling, and two sub-lieutenants, Fritz Scheuneberg and Baron von Ey-rick, a very short, fair-haired man, who was proud and brutal toward men, harsh toward prisoners and as explosive as gun-powder.

Since he had been in France his comrades had called him nothing but Mademoiselle Fifi. They had given him that nickname on account of his dandified style and small waist, which looked as if he wore corsets; of his pale face, on which his budding mustache scarcely showed, and on account of the habit he had acquired of employing the French expression, *Fi, fi donc*, which he pronounced with a slight whistle when he wished to express his sovereign contempt for persons or things.

The dining-room of the château was a magnificent long room, whose fine old mirrors, that were cracked by pistol bullets, and whose Flemish tapestry, which was cut to ribbons, and hanging in rags in places from sword-cuts, told too well what Mademoiselle Fifi's occupation was during his spare time.

There were three family portraits on the walls: a steel-clad knight, a cardinal and a judge, who were all smoking long porcelain pipes, which had been inserted into holes in the canvas, while a lady in a long, pointed waist proudly exhibited a pair of enormous mustaches, drawn with charcoal. The officers ate their breakfast almost in silence in that mutilated room, which looked dull in the rain and melancholy in its dilapidated condition, although its old oak floor had become as solid as the stone floor of an inn.

When they had finished eating and were smoking and drinking, they began, as usual, to berate the dull life they were leading. The bottles of brandy and of liqueur passed from hand to hand, and all sat back in their

chairs and took repeated sips from their glasses, scarcely removing from their mouths the long, curved stems, which terminated in china bowls, painted in a manner to delight a Hottentot.

As soon as their glasses were empty they filled them again, with a gesture of resigned weariness, but Mademoiselle Fifi emptied his every minute, and a soldier immediately gave him another. They were enveloped in a cloud of strong tobacco smoke, and seemed to be sunk in a state of drowsy, stupid intoxication, that condition of stupid intoxication of men who have nothing to do, when suddenly the baron sat up and said: "Heavens! This cannot go on; we must think of something to do." And on hearing this, Lieutenant Otto and Sub-lieutenant Fritz, who preëminently possessed the serious, heavy German countenance, said: "What, captain?"

He thought for a few moments and then replied: "What? Why, we must get up some entertainment, if the commandant will allow us." "What sort of an entertainment, captain?" the major asked, taking his pipe out of his mouth. "I will arrange all that, commandant," the baron said. "I will send Le Devoir to Rouen, and he will bring back some ladies. I know where they can be found. We will have supper here, as all the materials are at hand, and, at least, we shall have a jolly evening."

Graf von Farlsberg shrugged his shoulders with a smile: "You must surely be mad, my friend."

But all the other officers had risen and surrounded their chief, saying: "Let the captain have his way, commandant; it is terribly dull here." And the major ended by yielding. "Very well," he replied, and the baron immediately sent for Le Devoir. He was an old non-

commissioned officer, who had never been seen to smile, but who carried out all the orders of his superiors to the letter, no matter what they might be. He stood there, with an impassive face, while he received the baron's instructions, and then went out, and five minutes later a large military wagon, covered with tarpaulin, galloped off as fast as four horses could draw it in the pouring rain. The officers all seemed to awaken from their lethargy; their looks brightened, and they began to talk.

Although it was raining as hard as ever, the major declared that it was not so dark, and Lieutenant von Grossling said with conviction that the sky was clearing up, while Mademoiselle Fifi did not seem to be able to keep still. He got up and sat down again, and his bright eyes seemed to be looking for something to destroy. Suddenly, looking at the lady with the mustaches, the young fellow pulled out his revolver and said: "You shall not see it." And without leaving his seat he aimed, and with two successive bullets cut out both the eyes of the portrait.

"Let us make a mine!" he then exclaimed, and the conversation was suddenly interrupted, as if they had found some fresh and powerful subject of interest. The mine was his invention, his method of destruction, and his favorite amusement.

When he left the château, the lawful owner, Comte Fernand d'Amoys d'Uville, had not had time to carry away or to hide anything except the plate, which had been stowed away in a hole made in one of the walls. As he was very rich and had good taste, the large drawing-room, which opened into the dining-room, looked like a gallery in a museum, before his precipitate flight.

Expensive oil paintings, water colors and drawings

hung against the walls, while on the tables, on the hanging shelves and in elegant glass cupboards there were a thousand ornaments: small vases, statuettes, groups of Dresden china and grotesque Chinese figures, old ivory and Venetian glass, which filled the large room with their costly and fantastic array.

Scarcely anything was left now; not that the things had been stolen, for the major would not have allowed that, but Mademoiselle Fifi would every now and then have a mine, and on those occasions all the officers thoroughly enjoyed themselves for five minutes. The little marquis went into the drawing-room to get what he wanted, and he brought back a small, delicate china teapot, which he filled with gunpowder, and carefully introduced a piece of punk through the spout. This he lighted and took his infernal machine into the next room, but he came back immediately and shut the door. The Germans all stood expectant, their faces full of childish, smiling curiosity, and as soon as the explosion had shaken the château, they all rushed in at once.

Mademoiselle Fifi, who got in first, clapped his hands in delight at the sight of a terra-cotta Venus, whose head had been blown off, and each picked up pieces of porcelain and wondered at the strange shape of the fragments, while the major was looking with a paternal eye at the large drawing-room, which had been wrecked after the fashion of a Nero, and was strewn with the fragments of works of art. He went out first and said with a smile: "That was a great success this time."

But there was such a cloud of smoke in the dining-room, mingled with the tobacco smoke, that they could not breathe, so the commandant opened the window, and all the officers, who had returned for a last glass of cognac, went up to it.

The moist air blew into the room, bringing with it a sort of powdery spray, which sprinkled their beards. They looked at the tall trees which were dripping with rain, at the broad valley which was covered with mist, and at the church spire in the distance, which rose up like a gray point in the beating rain.

The bells had not rung since their arrival. That was the only resistance which the invaders had met with in the neighborhood. The parish priest had not refused to take in and to feed the Prussian soldiers; he had several times even drunk a bottle of beer or claret with the hostile commandant, who often employed him as a benevolent intermediary; but it was no use to ask him for a single stroke of the bells; he would sooner have allowed himself to be shot. That was his way of protesting against the invasion, a peaceful and silent protest, the only one, he said, which was suitable to a priest, who was a man of mildness, and not of blood; and every one, for twenty-five miles round, praised Abbé Chantavoine's firmness and heroism in venturing to proclaim the public mourning by the obstinate silence of his church bells.

The whole village, enthusiastic at his resistance, was ready to back up their pastor and to risk anything, for they looked upon that silent protest as the safeguard of the national honor. It seemed to the peasants that thus they deserved better of their country than Belfort and Strassburg, that they had set an equally valuable example, and that the name of their little village would become immortalized by that; but, with that exception, they refused their Prussian conquerors nothing.

The commandant and his officers laughed among themselves at this inoffensive courage, and as the people in the whole country round showed themselves obliging

and compliant toward them, they willingly tolerated their silent patriotism. Little Baron Wilhelm alone would have liked to have forced them to ring the bells. He was very angry at his superior's politic compliance with the priest's scruples, and every day begged the commandant to allow him to sound "ding-dong, ding-dong," just once, only just once, just by way of a joke. And he asked it in the coaxing, tender voice of some loved woman who is bent on obtaining her wish, but the commandant would not yield, and to console himself, Mademoiselle Fifi made a mine in the Château d'Uville.

The five men stood there together for five minutes, breathing in the moist air, and at last Lieutenant Fritz said with a laugh: "The ladies will certainly not have fine weather for their drive." Then they separated, each to his duty, while the captain had plenty to do in arranging for the dinner.

When they met again toward evening they began to laugh at seeing each other as spick and span and smart as on the day of a grand review. The commandant's hair did not look so gray as it was in the morning, and the captain had shaved, leaving only his mustache, which made him look as if he had a streak of fire under his nose.

In spite of the rain, they left the window open, and one of them went to listen from time to time; and at a quarter past six the baron said he heard a rumbling in the distance. They all rushed down, and presently the wagon drove up at a gallop with its four horses steaming and blowing, and splashed with mud to their girths. Five women dismounted, five handsome girls whom a comrade of the captain, to whom Le Devoir had presented his card, had selected with care.

They had not required much pressing, as they had

got to know the Prussians in the three months during which they had had to do with them, and so they resigned themselves to the men as they did to the state of affairs.

They went at once into the dining-room, which looked still more dismal in its dilapidated condition when it was lighted up; while the table covered with choice dishes, the beautiful china and glass, and the plate, which had been found in the hole in the wall where its owner had hidden it, gave it the appearance of a bandits' inn, where they were supping after committing a robbery in the place. The captain was radiant, and put his arm round the women as if he were familiar with them; and when the three young men wanted to appropriate one each, he opposed them authoritatively, reserving to himself the right to apportion them justly, according to their several ranks, so as not to offend the higher powers. Therefore, to avoid all discussion, jarring, and suspicion of partiality, he placed them all in a row according to height, and addressing the tallest, he said in a voice of command:

"What is your name?" "Pamela," she replied, raising her voice. And then he said: "Number One, called Pamela, is adjudged to the commandant." Then, having kissed Blondina, the second, as a sign of proprietorship, he proffered stout Amanda to Lieutenant Otto; Eva, "the Tomato," to Sub-lieutenant Fritz, and Rachel, the shortest of them all, a very young, dark girl, with eyes as black as ink, a Jewess, whose snub nose proved the rule which allots hooked noses to all her race, to the youngest officer, frail Count Wilhelm d'Eyrick.

They were all pretty and plump, without any distinctive features, and all had a similarity of complexion and figure.

The three young men wished to carry off their prizes immediately, under the pretext that they might wish to freshen their toilets; but the captain wisely opposed this, for he said they were quite fit to sit down to dinner, and his experience in such matters carried the day. There were only many kisses, expectant kisses.

Suddenly Rachel choked, and began to cough until the tears came into her eyes, while smoke came through her nostrils. Under pretence of kissing her, the count had blown a whiff of tobacco into her mouth. She did not fly into a rage and did not say a word, but she looked at her tormentor with latent hatred in her dark eyes.

They sat down to dinner. The commandant seemed delighted; he made Pamela sit on his right, and Blondina on his left, and said, as he unfolded his table napkin: "That was a delightful idea of yours, captain."

Lieutenants Otto and Fritz, who were as polite as if they had been with fashionable ladies, rather intimidated their guests, but Baron von Kelweinstein beamed, made obscene remarks and seemed on fire with his crown of red hair. He paid the women compliments in French of the Rhine, and sputtered out gallant remarks, only fit for a low pothouse, from between his two broken teeth.

They did not understand him, however, and their intelligence did not seem to be awakened until he uttered foul words and broad expressions, which were mangled by his accent. Then they all began to laugh at once like crazy women and fell against each other, repeating the words, which the baron then began to say all wrong, in order that he might have the pleasure of hearing them say dirty things. They gave him as much of that stuff as he wanted, for they were drunk after the

first bottle of wine, and resuming their usual habits and manners, they kissed the officers to right and left of them, pinched their arms, uttered wild cries, drank out of every glass and sang French couplets and bits of German songs which they had picked up in their daily intercourse with the enemy.

Soon the men themselves became very unrestrained, shouted and broke the plates and dishes, while the soldiers behind them waited on them stolidly. The commandant was the only one who kept any restraint upon himself.

Mademoiselle Fifi had taken Rachel on his knee, and, getting excited, at one moment he kissed the little black curls on her neck and at another he pinched her furiously and made her scream, for he was seized by a species of ferocity, and tormented by his desire to hurt her. He often held her close to him and pressed a long kiss on the Jewess' rosy mouth until she lost her breath, and at last he bit her until a stream of blood ran down her chin and on to her bodice.

For the second time she looked him full in the face, and as she bathed the wound, she said: "You will have to pay for that!" But he merely laughed a hard laugh and said: "I will pay."

At dessert champagne was served, and the commandant rose, and in the same voice in which he would have drunk to the health of the Empress Augusta, he drank: "To our ladies!" And a series of toasts began, toasts worthy of the lowest soldiers and of drunkards, mingled with obscene jokes, which were made still more brutal by their ignorance of the language. They got up, one after the other, trying to say something witty, forcing themselves to be funny, and the women, who were so drunk that they almost fell off their chairs,

with vacant looks and clammy tongues applauded madly each time.

The captain, who no doubt wished to impart an appearance of gallantry to the orgy, raised his glass again and said: "To our victories over hearts!" And, thereupon, Lieutenant Otto, who was a species of bear from the Black Forest, jumped up, inflamed and saturated with drink, and suddenly seized by an access of alcoholic patriotism, he cried: "To our victories over France!"

Drunk as they were, the women were silent, but Rachel turned round, trembling, and said: "See here, I know some Frenchmen in whose presence you would not dare say that." But the little count, still holding her on his knee, began to laugh, for the wine had made him very merry, and said: "Ha! ha! ha! I have never met any of them myself. As soon as we show ourselves, they run away!" The girl, who was in a terrible rage, shouted into his face: "You are lying, you dirty scoundrel!"

For a moment he looked at her steadily with his bright eyes upon her, as he had looked at the portrait before he destroyed it with bullets from his revolver, and then he began to laugh: "Ah! yes, talk about them, my dear! Should we be here now if they were brave?" And, getting excited, he exclaimed: "We are the masters! France belongs to us!" She made one spring from his knee and threw herself into her chair, while he arose, held out his glass over the table and repeated: "France and the French, the woods, the fields and the houses of France belong to us!"

The others, who were quite drunk, and who were suddenly seized by military enthusiasm, the enthusiasm

of brutes, seized their glasses, and shouting, "Long live Prussia!" they emptied them at a draught.

The girls did not protest, for they were reduced to silence and were afraid. Even Rachel did not say a word, as she had no reply to make. Then the little marquis put his champagne glass, which had just been refilled, on the head of the Jewess and exclaimed: "All the women in France belong to us also!"

At that she got up so quickly that the glass upset, spilling the amber-colored wine on her black hair as if to baptize her, and broke into a hundred fragments, as it fell to the floor. Her lips trembling, she defied the looks of the officer, who was still laughing, and stammered out in a voice choked with rage: "That—that—that—is not true—for you shall not have the women of France!"

He sat down again so as to laugh at his ease; and, trying to speak with the Parisian accent, he said: "She is good, very good! Then why did you come here, my dear?" She was thunderstruck and made no reply for a moment, for in her agitation she did not understand him at first, but as soon as she gasped his meaning she said to him indignantly and vehemently: "I! I! I am not a woman, I am only a strumpet, and that is all that Prussians want."

Almost before she had finished he slapped her full in the face; but as he was raising his hand again, as if to strike her, she seized a small dessert knife with a silver blade from the table and, almost mad with rage, stabbed him right in the hollow of his neck. Something that he was going to say was cut short in his throat, and he sat there with his mouth half open and a terrible look in his eyes.

All the officers shouted in horror and leaped up tu-

multuously; but, throwing her chair between the legs of Lieutenant Otto, who fell down at full length, she ran to the window, opened it before they could seize her and jumped out into the night and the pouring rain.

In two minutes Mademoiselle Fifi was dead, and Fritz and Otto drew their swords and wanted to kill the women, who threw themselves at their feet and clung to their knees. With some difficulty the major stopped the slaughter and had the four terrified girls locked up in a room under the care of two soldiers, and then he organized the pursuit of the fugitive as carefully as if he were about to engage in a skirmish, feeling quite sure that she would be caught.

The table, which had been cleared immediately, now served as a bed on which to lay out the lieutenant, and the four officers stood at the windows, rigid and sobered, with the stern faces of soldiers on duty, and tried to pierce through the darkness of the night amid the steady torrent of rain. Suddenly a shot was heard, and then another, a long way off; and for four hours they heard from time to time near or distant reports and rallying cries, strange words of challenge, uttered in guttural voices.

In the morning they all returned. Two soldiers had been killed and three others wounded by their comrades in the ardor of that chase and in the confusion of that nocturnal pursuit, but they had not caught Rachel.

Then the inhabitants of the district were terrorized, the houses were turned topsy-turvy, the country was scoured and beaten up, over and over again, but the Jewess did not seem to have left a single trace of her passage behind her.

When the general was told of it he gave orders to hush up the affair, so as not to set a bad example to the army, but he severely censured the commandant, who in turn punished his inferiors. The general had said: "One does not go to war in order to amuse one's self and to caress prostitutes." Graf von Farlsberg, in his exasperation, made up his mind to have his revenge on the district, but as he required a pretext for showing severity, he sent for the priest and ordered him to have the bell tolled at the funeral of Baron von Eyrick.

Contrary to all expectation, the priest showed himself humble and most respectful, and when Mademoiselle Fifi's body left the Château d'Uville on its way to the cemetery, carried by soldiers, preceded, surrounded and followed by soldiers who marched with loaded rifles, for the first time the bell sounded its funeral knell in a lively manner, as if a friendly hand were caressing it. At night it rang again, and the next day, and every day; it rang as much as any one could desire. Sometimes even it would start at night and sound gently through the darkness, seized with a strange joy, awakened one could not tell why. All the peasants in the neighborhood declared that it was bewitched, and nobody except the priest and the sacristan would now go near the church tower. And they went because a poor girl was living there in grief and solitude and provided for secretly by those two men.

She remained there until the German troops departed, and then one evening the priest borrowed the baker's cart and himself drove his prisoner to Rouen. When they got there he embraced her, and she quickly went back on foot to the establishment from which she had

come, where the proprietress, who thought that she was dead, was very glad to see her.

A short time afterward a patriot who had no prejudices, and who liked her because of her bold deed, and who afterward loved her for herself, married her and made her a lady quite as good as many others.

THE PIECE OF STRING

IT was market-day, and from all the country round Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming toward the town. The men walked slowly, throwing the whole body forward at every step of their long, crooked legs. They were deformed from pushing the plough which makes the left shoulder higher, and bends their figures sideways; from reaping the grain, when they have to spread their legs so as to keep on their feet. Their starched blue blouses, glossy as though varnished, ornamented at collar and cuffs with a little embroidered design and blown out around their bony bodies, looked very much like balloons about to soar, whence issued two arms and two feet.

Some of these fellows dragged a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. And just behind the animal followed their wives beating it over the back with a leaf-covered branch to hasten its pace, and carrying large baskets out of which protruded the heads of chickens or ducks. These women walked more quickly and energetically than the men, with their erect, dried-up figures, adorned with scanty little shawls pinned over their flat bosoms, and their heads wrapped round with a white cloth, enclosing the hair and surmounted by a cap.

Now a char-à-banc passed by, jogging along behind a nag and shaking up strangely the two men on the seat, and the woman at the bottom of the cart who held fast to its sides to lessen the hard jolting.

In the market-place at Goderville was a great crowd,

a mingled multitude of men and beasts. The horns of cattle, the high, long-napped hats of wealthy peasants, the headdresses of the women came to the surface of that sea. And the sharp, shrill, barking voices made a continuous, wild din, while above it occasionally rose a huge burst of laughter from the sturdy lungs of a merry peasant or a prolonged bellow from a cow tied fast to the wall of a house.

It all smelled of the stable, of milk, of hay and of perspiration, giving off that half-human, half-animal odor which is peculiar to country folks.

Maître Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, had just arrived at Goderville and was making his way toward the square when he perceived on the ground a little piece of string. Maître Hauchecorne, economical as are all true Normans, reflected that everything was worth picking up which could be of any use, and he stooped down, but painfully, because he suffered from rheumatism. He took the bit of thin string from the ground and was carefully preparing to roll it up when he saw Maître Malandain, the harness maker, on his doorstep staring at him. They had once had a quarrel about a halter, and they had borne each other malice ever since. Maître Hauchecorne was overcome with a sort of shame at being seen by his enemy picking up a bit of string in the road. He quickly hid it beneath his blouse and then slipped it into his breeches pocket, then pretended to be still looking for something on the ground which he did not discover and finally went off toward the market-place, his head bent forward and his body almost doubled in two by rheumatic pains.

He was at once lost in the crowd, which kept moving about slowly and noisily as it chattered and bargained. The peasants examined the cows, went off, came back,

always in doubt for fear of being cheated, never quite daring to decide, looking the seller square in the eye in the effort to discover the tricks of the man and the defect in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, had taken out the poultry, which lay upon the ground, their legs tied together, with terrified eyes and scarlet combs.

They listened to propositions, maintaining their prices in a decided manner with an impassive face or perhaps deciding to accept the smaller price offered, suddenly calling out to the customer who was starting to go away:

"All right, I'll let you have them, Maît' Anthime."

Then, little by little, the square became empty, and when the Angelus struck midday those who lived at a distance poured into the inns.

At Jourdain's the great room was filled with eaters, just as the vast court was filled with vehicles of every sort—wagons, gigs, chars-à-bancs, tilburies, innumerable vehicles which have no name, yellow with mud, misshapen, pieced together, raising their shafts to heaven like two arms, or it may be with their nose on the ground and their rear in the air.

Just opposite to where the diners were at table the huge fireplace, with its bright flame, gave out a burning heat on the backs of those who sat at the right. Three spits were turning, loaded with chickens, with pigeons and with joints of mutton, and a delectable odor of roast meat and of gravy flowing over crisp brown skin arose from the hearth, kindled merriment, caused mouths to water.

All the aristocracy of the plough were eating there at Maît' Jourdain's, the innkeeper's, a dealer in horses

also and a sharp fellow who had made a great deal of money in his day.

The dishes were passed round, were emptied, as were the jugs of yellow cider. Every one told of his affairs, of his purchases and his sales. They exchanged news about the crops. The weather was good for greens, but too wet for grain.

Suddenly the drum began to beat in the courtyard before the house. Every one, except some of the most indifferent, was on their feet at once and ran to the door, to the windows, their mouths full and napkins in their hand.

When the public crier had finished his tattoo he called forth in a jerky voice, pausing in the wrong places:

"Be it known to the inhabitants of Goderville and in general to all persons present at the market that there has been lost this morning on the Beuzeville road, between nine and ten o'clock, a black leather pocketbook containing five hundred francs and business papers. You are requested to return it to the mayor's office at once or to Maître Fortuné Houlbrèque, of Manneville. There will be twenty francs reward."

Then the man went away. They heard once more at a distance the dull beating of the drum and the faint voice of the crier. Then they all began to talk of this incident, reckoning up the chances which Maître Houlbrèque had of finding or of not finding his pocketbook again.

The meal went on. They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared on the threshold.

He asked:

"Is Maître Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, here?"

Maître Hauchecorne, seated at the other end of the table, answered:

"Here I am, here I am."

And he followed the corporal.

The mayor was waiting for him, seated in an arm-chair. He was the notary of the place, a tall, grave man of pompous speech.

"Maître Hauchecorne," said he, "this morning on the Beuzeville road, you were seen to pick up the pocket-book lost by Maître Houlbrière, of Manneville."

The countryman looked at the mayor in amazement, frightened already at this suspicion which rested on him, he knew not why.

"I—I picked up that pocketbook?"

"Yes, you."

"I swear I don't even know anything about it."

"You were seen."

"I was seen—I? Who saw me?"

"M. Malandain, the harness-maker."

Then the old man remembered, understood, and, reddening with anger, said:

"Ah! he saw me, did he, the rascal? He saw me picking up this string here, M'sieu le Maire."

And fumbling at the bottom of his pocket, he pulled out of it the little end of string.

But the mayor incredulously shook his head:

"You will not make me believe, Maître Hauchecorne, that M. Malandain, who is a man whose word can be relied on, has mistaken this string for a pocketbook."

The peasant, furious, raised his hand and spat on the ground beside him as if to attest his good faith, repeating:

"For all that, it is God's truth, M'sieu le Maire. There! On my soul's salvation, I repeat it."

The mayor continued:

"After you picked up the object in question, you even looked about for some time in the mud to see if a piece of money had not dropped out of it."

The good man was choking with indignation and fear.

"How can they tell—how can they tell such lies as that to slander an honest man! How can they?"

His protestations were in vain; he was not believed.

He was confronted with M. Malandain, who repeated and sustained his testimony. They railed at one another for an hour. At his own request Maître Hauchecorne was searched. Nothing was found on him.

At last the mayor, much perplexed, sent him away, warning him that he would inform the public prosecutor and ask for orders.

The news had spread. When he left the mayor's office the old man was surrounded, interrogated with a curiosity which was serious or mocking, as the case might be, but into which no indignation entered. And he began to tell the story of the string. They did not believe him. They laughed.

He passed on, buttonholed by every one, himself buttonholing his acquaintances, beginning over and over again his tale and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out to prove that he had nothing in them.

They said to him:

"You old rogue!"

He grew more and more angry, feverish, in despair at not being believed, and kept on telling his story.

The night came. It was time to go home. He left with three of his neighbors, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the string, and all the way he talked of his adventure.

That evening he made the round of the village of

Bréauté for the purpose of telling every one. He met only unbelievers.

He brooded over it all night long.

The next day, about one in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle, a farm hand of Maître Breton, the market gardener at Ymauville, returned the pocketbook and its contents to Maître Houibrèque, of Manneville.

This man said, indeed, that he had found it on the road, but not knowing how to read, he had carried it home and given it to his master.

The news spread to the environs. Maître Hauchecorne was informed. He started off at once and began to relate his story with the dénouement. He was triumphant.

"What grieved me," said he, "was not the thing itself, do you understand, but it was being accused of lying. Nothing does you so much harm as being in disgrace for lying."

All day he talked of his adventure. He told it on the roads to the people who passed, at the cabaret to the people who drank and next Sunday when they came out of church. He even stopped strangers to tell them about it. He was easy now, and yet something worried him without his knowing exactly what it was. People had a joking manner while they listened. They did not seem convinced. He seemed to feel their remarks behind his back.

On Tuesday of the following week he went to market at Goderville, prompted solely by the need of telling his story.

Malandain, standing on his doorstep, began to laugh as he saw him pass. Why?

He accosted a farmer of Criquetot, who did not let him finish, and giving him a punch in the pit of the

stomach, cried in his face: "Oh, you great rogue!" Then he turned his heel upon him.

Maître Hauchecorne remained speechless and grew more and more uneasy. Why had they called him "great rogue"?

When seated at table in Jourdain's tavern he began again to explain the whole affair.

A horse dealer of Montivilliers shouted at him:

"Get out, get out, you old scamp! I know all about your old string."

Hauchecorne stammered:

"But since they found it again, the pocketbook!"

But the other continued:

"Hold your tongue, daddy; there's one who finds it and there's another who returns it. And no one the wiser."

The farmer was speechless. He understood at last. They accused him of having had the pocketbook brought back by an accomplice, by a confederate.

He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner, and went away amid a chorus of jeers.

He went home indignant, choking with rage, with confusion, the more cast down since with his Norman craftiness he was, perhaps, capable of having done what they accused him of and even of boasting of it as a good trick. He was dimly conscious that it was impossible to prove his innocence, his craftiness being so well known. He felt himself struck to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

He began anew to tell his tale, lengthening his recital every day, each day adding new proofs, more energetic declarations and more sacred oaths, which he thought of, which he prepared in his hours of solitude, for his

mind was entirely occupied with the story of the string. The more he denied it, the more artful his arguments, the less he was believed.

"Those are liars' proofs," they said behind his back.

He felt this. It preyed upon him and he exhausted himself in useless efforts.

He was visibly wasting away.

Jokers would make him tell the story of "the piece of string" to amuse them, just as you make a soldier who has been on a campaign tell his story of the battle. His mind kept growing weaker and about the end of December he took to his bed.

He passed away early in January, and, in the ravings of death agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

"A little bit of string—a little bit of string. See, here it is, M'sieu le Maire."

BOULE DE SUIF

FOR several days in succession fragments of a defeated army had passed through the town. They were mere disorganized bands, not disciplined forces. The men wore long, dirty beards and tattered uniforms; they advanced in listless fashion, without a flag, without a leader. All seemed exhausted, worn out, incapable of thought or resolve, marching onward merely by force of habit, and dropping to the ground with fatigue the moment they halted. One saw, in particular, many enlisted men, peaceful citizens, men who lived quietly on their income, bending beneath the weight of their rifles; and little active volunteers, easily frightened but full of enthusiasm, as eager to attack as they were ready to take to flight; and amid these, a sprinkling of red-breeched soldiers, the pitiful remnant of a division cut down in a great battle; somber artillerymen, side by side with nondescript foot-soldiers; and, here and there, the gleaming helmet of a heavy-footed dragoon who had difficulty in keeping up with the quicker pace of the soldiers of the line.

Legions of irregulars with high-sounding names—"Avengers of Defeat," "Citizens of the Tomb," "Brethren in Death"—passed in their turn, looking like banditti.

Their leaders, former drapers or grain merchants, or tallow or soap chandlers—warriors by force of circumstances, officers by reason of their mustachios or their money—covered with weapons, flannel and gold lace,

spoke in an impressive manner, discussed plans of campaign, and behaved as though they alone bore the fortunes of dying France on their braggart shoulders; though, in truth, they frequently were afraid of their own men—scoundrels often brave beyond measure, but pillagers and debauchees.

Rumor had it that the Prussians were about to enter Rouen.

The members of the National Guard, who for the past two months had been reconnoitering with the utmost caution in the neighboring woods, occasionally shooting their own sentinels, and making ready for fight whenever a rabbit rustled in the undergrowth, had now returned to their homes. Their arms, their uniforms, all the death-dealing paraphernalia with which they had terrified all the milestones along the highroad for eight miles round, had suddenly and marvellously disappeared.

The last of the French soldiers had just crossed the Seine on their way to Pont-Audemer, through Saint-Sever and Bourg-Achard, and in their rear the vanquished general, powerless to do aught with the forlorn remnants of his army, himself dismayed at the final overthrow of a nation accustomed to victory and disastrously beaten despite its legendary bravery, walked between two orderlies.

Then a profound calm, a shuddering, silent dread, settled on the city. Many a round-paunched citizen, emasculated by years devoted to business, anxiously awaited the conquerors, trembling lest his roasting-jacks or kitchen knives should be looked upon as weapons.

Life seemed to have stopped short; the shops were shut, the streets deserted. Now and then an inhabitant, awed by the silence, glided swiftly by in the shadow

of the walls. The anguish of suspense made men even desire the arrival of the enemy.

In the afternoon of the day following the departure of the French troops, a number of uhlans, coming no one knew whence, passed rapidly through the town. A little later on, a black mass descended St. Catherine's Hill, while two other invading bodies appeared respectively on the Darnetal and the Boisguillaume roads. The advance guards of the three corps arrived at precisely the same moment at the Square of the Hôtel de Ville, and the German army poured through all the adjacent streets, its battalions making the pavement ring with their firm, measured tread.

Orders shouted in an unknown, guttural tongue rose to the windows of the seemingly dead, deserted houses; while behind the fast-closed shutters eager eyes peered forth at the victors—masters now of the city, its fortunes, and its lives, by "right of war." The inhabitants, in their darkened rooms, were possessed by that terror which follows in the wake of cataclysms, of deadly upheavals of the earth, against which all human skill and strength are vain. For the same thing happens whenever the established order of things is upset, when security no longer exists, when all those rights usually protected by the law of man or of Nature are at the mercy of unreasoning, savage force. The earthquake crushing a whole nation under falling roofs; the flood let loose, and engulfing in its swirling depths the corpses of drowned peasants, along with dead oxen and beams torn from shattered houses; or the army, covered with glory, murdering those who defend themselves, making prisoners of the rest, pillaging in the name of the Sword, and giving thanks to God to the thunder of cannon—all these are appalling scourges, which destroy all be-

lief in eternal justice, all that confidence we have been taught to feel in the protection of Heaven and the reason of man.

Small detachments of soldiers knocked at each door, and then disappeared within the houses; for the vanquished saw they would have to be civil to their conquerors.

At the end of a short time, once the first terror had subsided, calm was again restored. In many houses the Prussian officer ate at the same table with the family. He was often well-bred, and, out of politeness, expressed sympathy with France and repugnance at being compelled to take part in the war. This sentiment was received with gratitude; besides, his protection might be needful some day or other. By the exercise of tact the number of men quartered in one's house might be reduced; and why should one provoke the hostility of a person on whom one's whole welfare depended? Such conduct would savor less of bravery than of foolhardiness. And foolhardiness is no longer a failing of the citizens of Rouen as it was in the days when their city earned renown by its heroic defenses. Last of all—final argument based on the national politeness—the folk of Rouen said to one another that it was only right to be civil in one's own house, provided there was no public exhibition of familiarity with the foreigner. Out of doors, therefore, citizen and soldier did not know each other; but in the house both chatted freely, and each evening the German remained a little longer warming himself at the hospitable hearth.

Even the town itself resumed by degrees its ordinary aspect. The French seldom walked abroad, but the streets swarmed with Prussian soldiers. Moreover, the officers of the Blue Hussars, who arrogantly dragged

their instruments of death along the pavements, seemed to hold the simple townsmen in but little more contempt than did the French cavalry officers who had drunk at the same cafés the year before.

But there was something in the air, a something strange and subtle, an intolerable foreign atmosphere like a penetrating odor—the odor of invasion. It permeated dwellings and places of public resort, changed the taste of food, made one imagine one's self in far-distant lands, amid dangerous, barbaric tribes.

The conquerors exacted money, much money. The inhabitants paid what was asked; they were rich. But, the wealthier a Norman tradesman becomes, the more he suffers at having to part with anything that belongs to him, at having to see any portion of his substance pass into the hands of another.

Nevertheless, within six or seven miles of the town, along the course of the river as it flows onward to Croisset, Dieppedalle and Biessart, boatmen and fishermen often hauled to the surface of the water the body of a German, bloated in his uniform, killed by a blow from knife or club, his head crushed by a stone, or perchance pushed from some bridge into the stream below. The mud of the river-bed swallowed up these obscure acts of vengeance—savage, yet legitimate; these unrecorded deeds of bravery; these silent attacks fraught with greater danger than battles fought in broad day, and surrounded, moreover, with no halo of romance. For hatred of the foreigner ever arms a few intrepid souls, ready to die for an idea.

At last, as the invaders, though subjecting the town to the strictest discipline, had not committed any of the deeds of horror with which they had been credited while on their triumphal march, the people grew bolder,

and the necessities of business again animated the breasts of the local merchants. Some of these had important commercial interests at Havre—occupied at present by the French army—and wished to attempt to reach that port by overland route to Dieppe, taking the boat from there.

Through the influence of the German officers whose acquaintance they had made, they obtained a permit to leave town from the general in command.

A large four-horse coach having, therefore, been engaged for the journey, and ten passengers having given in their names to the proprietor, they decided to start on a certain Tuesday morning before daybreak, to avoid attracting a crowd.

The ground had been frozen hard for some time past, and about three o'clock on Monday afternoon large black clouds from the north shed their burden of snow uninterruptedly all through that evening and night.

At half-past four in the morning the travellers met in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Normandie, where they were to take their seats in the coach.

They were still half asleep, and shivering with cold under their wraps. They could see one another but indistinctly in the darkness, and the mountain of heavy winter wraps in which each was swathed made them look like a gathering of obese priests in their long cassocks. But two men recognized each other, a third accosted them, and the three began to talk. "I am bringing my wife," said one. "So am I." "And I, too." The first speaker added: "We shall not return to Rouen, and if the Prussians approach Havre we will cross to England." All three, it turned out, had made the same plans, being of similar disposition and temperament.

Still the horses were not harnessed. A small lantern

carried by a stable-boy emerged now and then from one dark doorway to disappear immediately in another. The stamping of horses' hoofs, deadened by the dung and straw of the stable, was heard from time to time, and from inside the building issued a man's voice, talking to the animals and swearing at them. A faint tinkle of bells showed that the harness was being got ready; this tinkle soon developed into a continuous jingling, louder or softer according to the movements of the horse, sometimes stopping altogether, then breaking out in a sudden peal accompanied by a pawing of the ground by an iron-shod hoof.

The door suddenly closed. All noise ceased. The frozen townsmen were silent; they remained motionless, stiff with cold.

A thick curtain of glistening white flakes fell ceaselessly to the ground; it obliterated all outlines, enveloped all objects in an icy mantle of foam; nothing was to be heard throughout the length and breadth of the silent, winter-bound city save the vague, nameless rustle of falling snow—a sensation rather than a sound—the gentle mingling of light atoms which seemed to fill all space, to cover the whole world.

The man reappeared with his lantern, leading by a rope a melancholy-looking horse, evidently being led out against his inclination. The hostler placed him beside the pole, fastened the traces, and spent some time in walking round him to make sure that the harness was all right; for he could use only one hand, the other being engaged in holding the lantern. As he was about to fetch the second horse he noticed the motionless group of travellers, already white with snow, and said to them: "Why don't you get inside the coach? You'd be under shelter, at least."

This did not seem to have occurred to them, and they at once took his advice. The three men seated their wives at the far end of the coach, then got in themselves; lastly the other vague, snow-shrouded forms clambered to the remaining places without a word.

The floor was covered with straw, into which the feet sank. The ladies at the far end, having brought with them little copper foot-warmers heated by means of a kind of chemical fuel, proceeded to light these, and spent some time in expatiating in low tones on their advantages, saying over and over again things which they had all known for a long time.

At last, six horses instead of four having been harnessed to the diligence, on account of the heavy roads, a voice outside asked: "Is every one there?" To which a voice from the interior replied: "Yes," and they set out.

The vehicle moved slowly, slowly, at a snail's pace; the wheels sank into the snow; the entire body of the coach creaked and groaned; the horses slipped, puffed, steamed, and the coachman's long whip cracked incessantly, flying hither and thither, coiling up, then flinging out its length like a slender serpent, as it lashed some rounded flank, which instantly grew tense as it strained in further effort.

But the day grew apace. Those light flakes which one traveller, a native of Rouen, had compared to a rain of cotton fell no longer. A murky light filtered through dark, heavy clouds, which made the country more daz- zlingly white by contrast, a whiteness broken sometimes by a row of tall trees spangled with hoarfrost, or by a cottage roof hooded in snow.

Within the coach the passengers eyed one another curiously in the dim light of dawn.

Right at the back, in the best seats of all, Monsieur and Madame Loiseau, wholesale wine merchants of the Rue Grand-Pont, slumbered opposite each other. Formerly clerk to a merchant who had failed in business, Loiseau had bought his master's interest, and made a fortune for himself. He sold very bad wine at a very low price to the retail dealers in the country, and had the reputation, among his friends and acquaintances, of being a shrewd rascal, a true Norman, full of quips and wiles. So well established was his character as a cheat that, in the mouths of the citizens of Rouen, the very name of Loiseau became a byword for sharp practice.

Above and beyond this, Loiseau was noted for his practical jokes of every description—his tricks, good or ill-natured; and no one could mention his name without adding at once: "He's an extraordinary man—Loiseau." He was undersized and potbellied, had a florid face with grayish whiskers.

His wife—tall, strong, determined, with a loud voice and decided manner—represented the spirit of order and arithmetic in the business house which Loiseau enlivened by his jovial activity.

Beside them, dignified in bearing, belonging to a superior caste, sat Monsieur Carré-Lamadon, a man of considerable importance, a king in the cotton trade, proprietor of three spinning-mills, officer of the Legion of Honor, and member of the General Council. During the whole time the Empire was in the ascendancy he remained the chief of the well-disposed Opposition, merely in order to command a higher value for his devotion when he should rally to the cause which he meanwhile opposed with "courteous weapons," to use his own expression.

Madame Carré-Lamadon, much younger than her husband, was the consolation of all the officers of good family quartered at Rouen. Pretty, slender, graceful, she sat opposite her husband, curled up in her furs, and gazing mournfully at the sorry interior of the coach.

Her neighbors, the Count and Countess Hubert de Bréville, bore one of the noblest and most ancient names in Normandy. The count, a nobleman advanced in years and of aristocratic bearing, strove to enhance, by every artifice of the toilet, his natural resemblance to King Henry IV, who, according to a legend of which the family were inordinately proud, had been the favored lover of a De Bréville lady, and father of her child—the frail one's husband having, in recognition of this fact, been made a count and governor of a province.

A colleague of Monsieur Carré-Lamadon in the General Council, Count Hubert represented the Orleanist party in his department. The story of his marriage with the daughter of a small ship-owner at Nantes had always remained more or less of a mystery. But as the countess had an air of unmistakable breeding, entertained faultlessly, and was even supposed to have been loved by a son of Louis-Philippe, the nobility vied with one another in doing her honor, and her drawing-room remained the most select in the whole countryside—the only one which retained the old spirit of gallantry, and to which access was not easy.

The fortune of the Brévilles, all in real estate, amounted, it was said, to five hundred thousand francs a year.

These six people occupied the farther end of the coach, and represented Society—with an income—the strong,

established society of good people with religion and principle.

It happened by chance that all the women were seated on the same side; and the countess had, moreover, as neighbors two nuns, who spent the time in fingering their long rosaries and murmuring paternosters and aves. One of them was old, and so deeply pitted with smallpox that she looked for all the world as if she had received a charge of shot full in the face. The other, of sickly appearance, had a pretty but wasted countenance, and a narrow, consumptive chest, sapped by that devouring faith which is the making of martyrs and visionaries.

A man and woman, sitting opposite the two nuns, attracted all eyes.

The man—a well-known character—was Cornudet, the democrat, the terror of all respectable people. For the past twenty years his big red beard had been on terms of intimate acquaintance with the tankards of all the republican cafés. With the help of his comrades and brethren he had dissipated a respectable fortune left him by his father, an old-established confectioner, and he now impatiently awaited the Republic, that he might at last be rewarded with the post he had earned by his revolutionary orgies. On the fourth of September—possibly as the result of a practical joke—he was led to believe that he had been appointed prefect; but when he attempted to take up the duties of the position the clerks in charge of the office refused to recognize his authority, and he was compelled in consequence to retire. A good sort of fellow in other respects, inoffensive and obliging, he had thrown himself zealously into the work of making an organized defence of the town. He had had pits dug in the level country, young

forest trees felled, and traps set on all the roads; then at the approach of the enemy, thoroughly satisfied with his preparations, he had hastily returned to the town. He thought he might now do more good at Havre, where new intrenchments would soon be necessary.

The woman, who belonged to the courtesan class, was celebrated for an *embonpoint* unusual for her age, which had earned for her the sobriquet of "Boule de Suif" (Tallow Ball). Short and round, fat as a pig, with puffy fingers constricted at the joints, looking like rows of short sausages; with a shiny, tightly-stretched skin and an enormous bust filling out the bodice of her dress, she was yet attractive and much sought after, owing to her fresh and pleasing appearance. Her face was like a crimson apple, a peony-bud just bursting into bloom; she had two magnificent dark eyes, fringed with thick, heavy lashes, which cast a shadow into their depths; her mouth was small, ripe, kissable, and was furnished with the tiniest of white teeth.

As soon as she was recognized the respectable matrons of the party began to whisper among themselves, and the words "hussy" and "public scandal" were uttered so loudly that Boule de Suif raised her head. She forthwith cast such a challenging, bold look at her neighbors that a sudden silence fell on the company, and all lowered their eyes, with the exception of Loiseau, who watched her with evident interest.

But conversation was soon resumed among the three ladies, whom the presence of this girl had suddenly drawn together in the bonds of friendship—one might almost say in those of intimacy. They decided that they ought to combine, as it were, in their dignity as wives in face of this shameless hussy; for legitimized love always despises its easy-going brother.

The three men, also, brought together by a certain conservative instinct awakened by the presence of Cornudet, spoke of money matters in a tone expressive of contempt for the poor. Count Hubert related the losses he had sustained at the hands of the Prussians, spoke of the cattle which had been stolen from him, the crops which had been ruined, with the easy manner of a nobleman who was also a tenfold millionaire, and whom such reverses would scarcely inconvenience for a single year. Monsieur Carré-Lamadon, a man of wide experience in the cotton industry, had taken care to send six hundred thousand francs to England as provision against the rainy day he was always anticipating. As for Loiseau, he had managed to sell to the French commissariat department all the wines he had in stock, so that the state now owed him a considerable sum, which he hoped to receive at Havre.

And all three eyed one another in friendly, well-disposed fashion. Although of varying social status, they were united in the brotherhood of money—in that vast freemasonry made up of those who possess, who can jingle gold whenever they choose to put their hands into their breeches pockets.

The coach went along so slowly that at ten o'clock in the morning it had not covered twelve miles. Three times the men of the party got out and climbed the hills on foot. The passengers were becoming uneasy, for they had counted on lunching at Tôtes, and it seemed now as if they would hardly arrive there before night-fall. Every one was eagerly looking out for an inn by the roadside, when, suddenly, the coach foundered in a snowdrift, and it took two hours to extricate it.

As appetites increased, their spirits fell; no inn, no wine shop could be discovered, the approach of the Prus-

sians and the transit of the starving French troops having frightened away all business.

The men sought food in the farmhouses beside the road, but could not find so much as a crust of bread; for the suspicious peasant invariably hid his stores for fear of being pillaged by the soldiers, who, being entirely without food, would take violent possession of everything they found.

About one o'clock Loiseau announced that he positively had a big hollow in his stomach. They had all been suffering in the same way for some time, and the increasing gnawings of hunger had put an end to all conversation.

Now and then some one yawned, another followed his example, and each in turn, according to his character, breeding and social position, yawned either quietly or noisily, placing his hand before the gaping void whence issued breath condensed into vapor.

Several times Boule de Suif stooped, as if searching for something under her petticoats. She would hesitate a moment, look at her neighbors, and then quietly sit upright again. All faces were pale and drawn. Loiseau declared he would give a thousand francs for a knuckle of ham. His wife made an involuntary and quickly checked gesture of protest. It always hurt her to hear of money being squandered, and she could not even understand jokes on such a subject.

"As a matter of fact, I don't feel well," said the count. "Why did I not think of bringing provisions?" Each one reproached himself in similar fashion.

Cornudet, however, had a bottle of rum, which he offered to his neighbors. They all coldly refused except Loiseau, who took a sip, and returned the bottle with thanks, saying: "That's good stuff; it warms one

up, and cheats the appetite." The alcohol put him in good humor, and he proposed they should do as the sailors did in the song: eat the fattest of the passengers. This indirect allusion to Boule de Suif shocked the respectable members of the party. No one replied; only Cornudet smiled. The two good sisters had ceased to mumble their rosary, and, with hands enfolded in their wide sleeves, sat motionless, their eyes steadfastly cast down, doubtless offering up as a sacrifice to Heaven the suffering it had sent them.

At last, at three o'clock, as they were in the midst of an apparently limitless plain, with not a single village in sight, Boule de Suif stooped quickly, and drew from underneath the seat a large basket covered with a white napkin.

From this she extracted first of all a small earthenware plate and a silver drinking cup, then an enormous dish containing two whole chickens cut into joints and imbedded in jelly. The basket was seen to contain other good things: pies, fruit, dainties of all sorts—provisions, in fine, for a three days' journey, rendering their owner independent of wayside inns. The necks of four bottles protruded from among the food. She took a chicken wing, and began to eat it daintily, together with one of those rolls called in Normandy "Régence."

All looks were directed toward her. An odor of food filled the air, causing nostrils to dilate, mouths to water, and jaws to contract painfully. The scorn of the ladies for this disreputable female grew positively ferocious; they would have liked to kill her, or throw her and her drinking cup, her basket, and her provisions, out of the coach into the snow of the road below.

But Loiseau's gaze was fixed greedily on the dish of chicken. He said:

"Well, well, this lady had more forethought than the rest of us. Some people think of everything."

She looked up at him.

"Would you like some, sir? It is hard to go on fasting all day."

He bowed.

"Upon my soul, I can't refuse; I cannot hold out another minute. All is fair in war time, is it not, madame?" And, casting a glance on those around, he added:

"At times like this it is very pleasant to meet with obliging people."

He spread a newspaper over his knees to avoid soiling his trousers, and, with a pocketknife he always carried, helped himself to a chicken leg coated with jelly, which he thereupon proceeded to devour.

Then Boule de Suif, in low, humble tones, invited the nuns to partake of her repast. They both accepted the offer unhesitatingly, and after a few stammered words of thanks began to eat quickly, without raising their eyes. Neither did Cornudet refuse his neighbor's offer, and, in combination with the nuns, a sort of table was formed by opening out the newspaper over the four pairs of knees.

Mouths kept opening and shutting, ferociously masticating and devouring the food. Loiseau, in his corner, was hard at work, and in low tones urged his wife to follow his example. She held out for a long time, but overstrained Nature gave way at last. Her husband, assuming his politest manner, asked their "charming companion" if he might be allowed to offer Madame Loiseau a small helping.

"Why, certainly, sir," she replied, with an amiable smile, holding out the dish.

When the first bottle of claret was opened some embarrassment was caused by the fact that there was only one drinking cup, but this was passed from one to another, after being wiped. Cornudet alone, doubtless in a spirit of gallantry, raised to his own lips that part of the rim which was still moist from those of his fair neighbor.

Then, surrounded by people who were eating, and well-nigh suffocated by the odor of food, the Count and Countess de Bréville and Monsieur and Madame Carré-Lamadon endured that hateful form of torture which has perpetuated the name of Tantalus. All at once the manufacturer's young wife heaved a sigh which made every one turn and look at her; she was white as the snow without; her eyes closed, her head fell forward; she had fainted. Her husband, beside himself, implored the help of his neighbors. No one seemed to know what to do until the elder of the two nuns, raising the patient's head, placed Boule de Suif's drinking cup to her lips, and made her swallow a few drops of wine. The pretty invalid moved, opened her eyes, smiled, and declared in a feeble voice that she was all right again. But, to prevent a recurrence of the catastrophe, the nun made her drink a cupful of claret, adding: "It's just hunger—that's what is wrong with you."

Then Boule de Suif, blushing and embarrassed, stammered, looking at the four passengers who were still fasting:

"*Mon Dieu*, if I might offer these ladies and gentlemen——"

She stopped short, fearing a snub. But Loiseau continued:

"Hang it all, in such a case as this we are all brothers and sisters and ought to assist each other. Come,

come, ladies, don't stand on ceremony, for goodness' sake! Do we even know whether we shall find a house in which to pass the night? At our present rate of going we sha'n't be at Tôtes till midday to-morrow."

They hesitated, no one daring to be the first to accept. But the count settled the question. He turned toward the abashed girl, and in his most distinguished manner said:

"We accept gratefully, madame."

As usual, it was only the first step that cost. This Rubicon once crossed, they set to work with a will. The basket was emptied. It still contained a *pâté de foie gras*, a lark pie, a piece of smoked tongue, Crassane pears, Pont-Léveque gingerbread, fancy cakes, and a cup full of pickled gherkins and onions—Boule de Suif, like all women, being very fond of indigestible things.

They could not eat this girl's provisions without speaking to her. So they began to talk, stiffly at first; then, as she seemed by no means forward, with greater freedom. Mesdames de Bréville and Carré-Lamadon, who were accomplished women of the world, were gracious and tactful. The countess especially displayed that amiable condescension characteristic of great ladies whom no contact with baser mortals can sully, and was absolutely charming. But the sturdy Madame Loiseau, who had the soul of a gendarme, continued morose, speaking little and eating much.

Conversation naturally turned on the war. Terrible stories were told about the Prussians, deeds of bravery were recounted of the French; and all these people who were fleeing themselves were ready to pay homage to the courage of their compatriots. Personal experiences soon followed, and Boule de Suif related with genuine emotion, and with that warmth of language not uncommon

in women of her class and temperament, how it came about that she had left Rouen.

"I thought at first that I should be able to stay," she said. "My house was well stocked with provisions, and it seemed better to put up with feeding a few soldiers than to banish myself goodness knows where. But when I saw these Prussians it was too much for me! My blood boiled with rage; I wept the whole day for very shame. Oh, if only I had been a man! I looked at them from my window—the fat swine, with their pointed helmets!—and my maid held my hands to keep me from throwing my furniture down on them. Then some of them were quartered on me; I flew at the throat of the first one who entered. They are just as easy to strangle as other men! And I'd have been the death of that one if I hadn't been dragged away from him by my hair. I had to hide after that. And as soon as I could get an opportunity I left the place, and here I am."

She was warmly congratulated. She rose in the estimation of her companions, who had not been so brave; and Cornudet listened to her with the approving and benevolent smile of an apostle, the smile a priest might wear in listening to a devotee praising God; for long-bearded democrats of his type have a monopoly of patriotism, just as priests have a monopoly of religion. He held forth in turn, with dogmatic self-assurance, in the style of the proclamations daily pasted on the walls of the town, winding up with a specimen of stump oratory in which he reviled "that besotted fool of a Louis-Napoleon."

But Boule de Suif was indignant, for she was an ardent Bonapartist. She turned as red as a cherry, and stammered in her wrath: "I'd just like to have

seen you in his place—you and your sort! There would have been a nice mix-up. Oh, yes! It was you who betrayed that man. It would be impossible to live in France if we were governed by such rascals as you!”

Cornudet, unmoved by this tirade, still smiled a superior, contemptuous smile; and one felt that high words were impending, when the count interposed, and, not without difficulty, succeeded in calming the exasperated woman, saying that all sincere opinions ought to be respected. But the countess and the manufacturer's wife, imbued with the unreasoning hatred of the upper classes for the Republic, and instinct, moreover, with the affection felt by all women for the pomp and circumstance of despotic government, were drawn, in spite of themselves, toward this dignified young woman, whose opinions coincided so closely with their own.

The basket was empty. The ten people had finished its contents without difficulty amid general regret that it did not hold more. Conversation went on a little longer, though it flagged somewhat after the passengers had finished eating.

Night fell, the darkness grew deeper and deeper, and the cold made Boule de Suif shiver, in spite of her plumpness. So Madame de Bréville offered her her foot-warmer, the fuel of which had been several times renewed since the morning, and she accepted the offer at once, for her feet were icy cold. Mesdames Carré-Lamadon and Loiseau gave theirs to the nuns.

The driver lighted his lanterns. They cast a bright gleam on a cloud of vapor which hovered over the sweating flanks of the horses, and on the roadside snow, which seemed to unroll as they went along in the changing light of the lamps.

All was now indistinguishable in the coach; but sud-

denly a movement occurred in the corner occupied by Boule de Suif and Cornudet; and Loiseau, peering into the gloom, fancied he saw the big, bearded democrat move hastily to one side, as if he had received a well-directed, though noiseless, blow in the dark.

Tiny lights glimmered ahead. It was Tôtes. The coach had been on the road eleven hours, which, with the three hours allotted the horses in four periods for feeding and breathing, made fourteen. It entered the town, and stopped before the Hôtel du Commerce.

The coach door opened; a well-known noise made all the travellers start; it was the clanging of a scabbard on the pavement; then a voice called out something in German.

Although the coach had come to a standstill, no one got out; it looked as if they were afraid of being murdered the moment they left their seats. Thereupon the driver appeared, holding in his hand one of his lanterns, which cast a sudden glow on the interior of the coach, lighting up the double row of startled faces, mouths agape, and eyes wide open in surprise and terror.

Beside the driver stood in the full light a German officer, a tall young man, fair and slender, tightly encased in his uniform like a woman in her corset, his flat shiny cap, tilted to one side of his head, making him look like an English hotel runner. His exaggerated mustache, long and straight and tapering to a point at either end in a single blond hair that could hardly be seen, seemed to weigh down the corners of his mouth and give a droop to his lips.

In Alsatian French he requested the travellers to alight, saying stiffly:

"Kindly get down, ladies and gentlemen."

The two nuns were the first to obey, manifesting the docility of holy women accustomed to submission on every occasion. Next appeared the count and countess, followed by the manufacturer and his wife, after whom came Loiseau, pushing his larger and better half before him.

"Good-day, sir," he said to the officer as he put his foot to the ground, acting on an impulse born of prudence rather than of politeness. The other, insolent like all in authority, merely stared without replying.

Boule de Suif and Cornudet, though near the door, were the last to alight, grave and dignified before the enemy. The stout girl tried to control herself and appear calm; the democrat stroked his long russet beard with a somewhat trembling hand. Both strove to maintain their dignity, knowing well that at such a time each individual is always looked upon as more or less typical of his nation; and, also, resenting the complaisant attitude of their companions, Boule de Suif tried to wear a bolder front than her neighbors, the virtuous women, while he, feeling that it was incumbent on him to set a good example, kept up the attitude of resistance which he had first assumed when he undertook to mine the high roads round Rouen.

They entered the spacious kitchen of the inn, and the German, having demanded the passports signed by the general in command, in which were mentioned the name, description and profession of each traveller, inspected them all minutely, comparing their appearance with the written particulars.

Then he said brusquely: "All right," and turned on his heel.

They breathed freely. All were still hungry; so supper was ordered. Half an hour was required for its

preparation, and while two servants were apparently engaged in getting it ready the travellers went to look at their rooms. These all opened off a long corridor, at the end of which was a glazed door with a number on it.

They were just about to take their seats at table when the innkeeper appeared in person. He was a former horse dealer—a large, asthmatic individual, always wheezing, coughing, and clearing his throat. Follenvie was his patronymic.

He called:

“Mademoiselle Elisabeth Rousset?”

Boule de Suif started, and turned round.

“That is my name.”

“Mademoiselle, the Prussian officer wishes to speak to you immediately.”

“To me?”

“Yes; if you are Mademoiselle Elisabeth Rousset.”

She hesitated, reflected a moment, and then declared roundly:

“That may be; but I’m not going.”

They moved restlessly around her; every one wondered and speculated as to the cause of this order. The count approached:

“You are wrong, madame, for your refusal may bring trouble not only on yourself, but also on all your companions. It never pays to resist those in authority. Your compliance with this request cannot possibly be fraught with any danger; it has probably been made because some formality or other was forgotten.”

All added their voices to that of the count; Boule de Suif was begged, urged, lectured, and at last convinced; every one was afraid of the complications which

might result from headstrong action on her part. She said finally:

"I am doing it for your sakes, remember that!"

The countess took her hand.

"And we are grateful to you."

She left the room. All waited for her return before commencing the meal. Each was distressed that he or she had not been sent for rather than this impulsive, quick-tempered girl, and each mentally rehearsed platitudes in case of being summoned also.

But at the end of ten minutes she reappeared, breathing hard, crimson with indignation.

"Oh! the scoundrel! the scoundrel!" she stammered.

All were anxious to know what had happened; but she declined to enlighten them, and when the count pressed the point, she silenced him with much dignity, saying:

"No; the matter has nothing to do with you, and I cannot speak of it."

Then they took their places round a high soup tureen, from which issued an odor of cabbage. In spite of this coincidence, the supper was cheerful. The cider was good; the Loiseaus and the nuns drank it from motives of economy. The others ordered wine; Cornudet demanded beer. He had his own fashion of uncorking the bottle and making the beer foam, gazing at it as he inclined his glass and then raised it to a position between the lamp and his eye that he might judge of its color. When he drank, his great beard, which matched the color of his favorite beverage, seemed to tremble with affection; his eyes positively squinted in the endeavor not to lose sight of the beloved glass, and he looked for all the world as if he were fulfilling the only function for which he was born. He seemed to

have established in his mind an affinity between the two great passions of his life—pale ale and revolution—and assuredly he could not taste the one without dreaming of the other.

Monsieur and Madame Follenvie dined at the end of the table. The man, wheezing like a broken-down locomotive, was too short-winded to talk when he was eating. But the wife was not silent a moment; she told how the Prussians had impressed her on their arrival, what they did, what they said; execrating them in the first place because they cost her money, and in the second because she had two sons in the army. She addressed herself principally to the countess, flattered at the opportunity of talking to a lady of quality.

Then she lowered her voice, and began to broach delicate subjects. Her husband interrupted her from time to time, saying:

“You would do well to hold your tongue, Madame Follenvie.”

But she took no notice of him, and went on:

“Yes, madame, these Germans do nothing but eat potatoes and pork, and then pork and potatoes. And don’t imagine for a moment that they are clean! No, indeed! And if only you saw them drilling for hours, indeed for days, together; they all collect in a field, then they do nothing but march backward and forward, and wheel this way and that. If only they would cultivate the land, or remain at home and work on their high roads! Really, madame, these soldiers are of no earthly use! Poor people have to feed and keep them, only in order that they may learn how to kill! True, I am only an old woman with no education, but when I see them wearing themselves out marching about from morning till night, I say to myself: When there are people who

make discoveries that are of use to people, why should others take so much trouble to do harm? Really, now, isn't it a terrible thing to kill people, whether they are Prussians, or English, or Poles, or French? If we revenge ourselves on any one who injures us we do wrong, and are punished for it; but when our sons are shot down like partridges, that is all right, and decorations are given to the man who kills the most. No, indeed, I shall never be able to understand it."

Cornudet raised his voice:

"War is a barbarous proceeding when we attack a peaceful neighbor, but it is a sacred duty when undertaken in defence of one's country."

The old woman looked down:

"Yes; it's another matter when one acts in self-defence; but would it not be better to kill all the kings, seeing that they make war just to amuse themselves?"

Cornudet's eyes kindled.

"Bravo, citizens!" he said.

Monsieur Carré-Lamadon was reflecting profoundly. Although an ardent admirer of great generals, the peasant woman's sturdy common sense made him reflect on the wealth which might accrue to a country by the employment of so many idle hands now maintained at a great expense, of so much unproductive force, if they were employed in those great industrial enterprises which it will take centuries to complete.

But Loiseau, leaving his seat, went over to the inn-keeper and began chatting in a low voice. The big man chuckled, coughed, sputtered; his enormous carcass shook with merriment at the pleasantries of the other; and he ended by buying six casks of claret from Loiseau to be delivered in spring, after the departure of the Prussians.

The moment supper was over every one went to bed, worn out with fatigue.

But Loiseau, who had been making his observations on the sly, sent his wife to bed, and amused himself by placing first his ear, and then his eye, to the bedroom keyhole, in order to discover what he called "the mysteries of the corridor."

At the end of about an hour he heard a rustling, peeped out quickly, and caught sight of Boule de Suif, looking more rotund than ever in a dressing-gown of blue cashmere trimmed with white lace. She held a candle in her hand, and directed her steps to the numbered door at the end of the corridor. But one of the side doors was partly opened, and when, at the end of a few minutes, she returned, Cornudet, in his shirt-sleeves, followed her. They spoke in low tones, then stopped short. Boule de Suif seemed to be stoutly denying him admission to her room. Unfortunately, Loiseau could not at first hear what they said; but toward the end of the conversation they raised their voices, and he caught a few words. Cornudet was loudly insistent.

"How silly you are! What does it matter to you?" he said.

She seemed indignant, and replied:

"No, my good man, there are times when one does not do that sort of thing; besides, in this place it would be shameful."

Apparently he did not understand, and asked the reason. Then she lost her temper and her caution, and, raising her voice still higher, said:

"Why? Can't you understand why? When there are Prussians in the house! Perhaps even in the very next room!"

He was silent. The patriotic shame of this wanton, who would not suffer herself to be caressed in the neighborhood of the enemy, must have roused his dormant dignity, for after bestowing on her a simple kiss he crept softly back to his room. Loiseau, much edified, capered round the bedroom before taking his place beside his slumbering spouse.

Then silence reigned throughout the house. But soon there arose from some remote part—it might easily have been either cellar or attic—a stertorous, monotonous, regular snoring, a dull, prolonged rumbling, varied by tremors like those of a boiler under pressure of steam. Monsieur Follenvie had gone to sleep.

As they had decided on starting at eight o'clock the next morning, every one was in the kitchen at that hour; but the coach, its roof covered with snow, stood by itself in the middle of the yard, without either horses or driver. They sought the latter in the stables, coach-houses and barns—but in vain. So the men of the party resolved to scour the country for him, and sallied forth. They found themselves in the square, with the church at the farther side, and to right and left low-roofed houses where there were some Prussian soldiers. The first soldier they saw was peeling potatoes. The second, farther on, was washing out a barber's shop. Another, bearded to the eyes, was fondling a crying infant, and dandling it on his knees to quiet it; and the stout peasant women, whose men-folk were for the most part at the war, were, by means of signs, telling their obedient conquerors what work they were to do: chop wood, prepare soup, grind coffee; one of them even was doing the washing for his hostess, an infirm old grandmother.

The count, astonished at what he saw, questioned the

beadle who was coming out of the presbytery. The old man answered:

"Oh, those men are not at all a bad sort; they are not Prussians, I am told; they come from somewhere farther off, I don't exactly know where. And they have all left wives and children behind them; they are not fond of war either, you may be sure! I am sure they are mourning for the men where they come from, just as we do here; and the war causes them just as much unhappiness as it does us. As a matter of fact, things are not so very bad here just now, because the soldiers do no harm, and work just as if they were in their own homes. You see, sir, poor folk always help one another; it is the great ones of this world who make war."

Cornudet, indignant at the friendly understanding established between conquerors and conquered, withdrew, preferring to shut himself up in the inn.

"They are repeopling the country," jested Loiseau.

"They are undoing the harm they have done," said Monsieur Carré-Lamadon gravely.

But they could not find the coach driver. At last he was discovered in the village café, fraternizing cordially with the officer's orderly.

"Were you not told to harness the horses at eight o'clock?" demanded the count.

"Oh, yes; but I've had different orders since."

"What orders?"

"Not to harness at all."

"Who gave you such orders?"

"Why, the Prussian officer."

"But why?"

"I don't know. Go and ask him. I am forbidden to harness the horses, so I don't harness them—that's all."

"Did he tell you so himself?"

"No, sir; the innkeeper gave me the order from him."

"When?"

"Last evening, just as I was going to bed."

The three men returned in a very uneasy frame of mind.

They asked for Monsieur Follenvie, but the servant replied that on account of his asthma he never got up before ten o'clock. They were strictly forbidden to rouse him earlier, except in case of fire.

They wished to see the officer, but that also was impossible, although he lodged in the inn. Monsieur Follenvie alone was authorized to interview him on civil matters. So they waited. The women returned to their rooms, and occupied themselves with trivial matters.

Cornudet settled down beside the tall kitchen fire-place, before a blazing fire. He had a small table and a jug of beer placed beside him, and he smoked his pipe—a pipe which enjoyed among democrats a consideration almost equal to his own, as though it had served its country in serving Cornudet. It was a fine meerschäum, admirably colored to a black the shade of its owner's teeth, but sweet-smelling, gracefully curved, at home in its master's hand, and completing his physiognomy. And Cornudet sat motionless his eyes fixed now on the dancing flames, now on the froth which crowned his beer; and after each draught he passed his long, thin fingers with an air of satisfaction through his long, greasy hair, as he sucked the foam from his mustache.

Loiseau, under pretence of stretching his legs, went out to see if he could sell wine to the country dealers. The count and the manufacturer began to talk politics. They forecast the future of France. One believed in

the Orleans dynasty, the other in an unknown savior—a hero who should rise up in the last extremity: a Du Guesclin, perhaps a Joan of Arc? or another Napoleon the First? Ah! if only the Prince Imperial were not so young! Cornudet, listening to them, smiled like a man who holds the keys of destiny in his hands. His pipe perfumed the whole kitchen.

As the clock struck ten, Monsieur Follenvie appeared. He was immediately surrounded and questioned, but could only repeat, three or four times in succession, and without variation, the words:

“The officer said to me, just like this: ‘Monsieur Follenvie, you will forbid them to harness up the coach for those travellers to-morrow. They are not to start without an order from me. You hear? That is sufficient.’”

Then they asked to see the officer. The count sent him his card, on which Monsieur Carré-Lamadon also inscribed his name and titles. The Prussian sent word that the two men would be admitted to see him after his luncheon—that is to say, about one o’clock.

The ladies reappeared, and they all ate a little, in spite of their anxiety. Boule de Suif appeared ill and very much worried.

They were finishing their coffee when the orderly came to fetch the gentlemen.

Loiseau joined the other two; but when they tried to get Cornudet to accompany them, by way of adding greater solemnity to the occasion, he declared proudly that he would never have anything to do with the Germans, and, resuming his seat in the chimney corner, he called for another jug of beer.

The three men went upstairs, and were ushered into the best room in the inn, where the officer received

them lolling at his ease in an armchair, his feet on the mantelpiece, smoking a long porcelain pipe, and enveloped in a gorgeous dressing-gown, doubtless stolen from the deserted dwelling of some citizen destitute of taste in dress. He neither rose, greeted them, nor even glanced in their direction. He afforded a fine example of that insolence of bearing which seems natural to the victorious soldier.

After the lapse of a few moments he said in his halting French:

"What do you want?"

"We wish to start on our journey," said the count.

"No."

"May I ask the reason of your refusal?"

"Because I don't choose."

"I would respectfully call your attention, monsieur, to the fact that your general in command gave us a permit to proceed to Dieppe; and I do not think we have done anything to deserve this harshness at your hands."

"I don't choose—that's all. You may go."

They bowed, and retired.

The afternoon was wretched. They could not understand the caprice of this German, and the strangest ideas came into their heads. They all congregated in the kitchen, and talked the subject to death, imagining all kinds of unlikely things. Perhaps they were to be kept as hostages—but for what reason? or to be extradited as prisoners of war? or possibly they were to be held for ransom? They were panic-stricken at this last supposition. The richest among them were the most alarmed, seeing themselves forced to empty bags of gold into the insolent soldier's hands in order to buy back their lives. They racked their brains for plausible lies whereby they might conceal the fact that they were

rich, and pass themselves off as poor—very poor. Loiseau took off his watch chain, and put it in his pocket. The approach of night increased their apprehension. The lamp was lighted, and as it wanted yet two hours to dinner Madame Loiseau proposed a game of *trente et un*. It would distract their thoughts. The rest agreed, and Cornudet himself joined the party, first putting out his pipe for politeness' sake.

The count shuffled the cards—dealt—and Boule de Suif had thirty-one to start with; soon the interest of the game assuaged the anxiety of the players. But Cornudet noticed that Loiseau and his wife were in league to cheat.

They were about to sit down to dinner when Monsieur Follenvie appeared, and in his grating voice announced:

"The Prussian officer sends to ask Mademoiselle Elisabeth Rousset if she has changed her mind yet."

Boule de Suif stood still, pale as death. Then, suddenly turning crimson with anger, she gasped out:

"Kindly tell that scoundrel, that cur, that carrion of a Prussian, that I will never consent—you understand?—never, never, never!"

The fat innkeeper left the room. Then Boule de Suif was surrounded, questioned, entreated on all sides to reveal the mystery of her visit to the officer. She refused at first; but her wrath soon got the better of her.

"What does he want? He wants to make me his mistress!" she cried.

No one was shocked at the word, so great was the general indignation. Cornudet broke his jug as he banged it down on the table. A loud outcry arose against this base soldier. All were furious. They drew together in common resistance against the foe, as if some part of the sacrifice exacted of Boule de Suif had

been demanded of each. The count declared, with supreme disgust, that those people behaved like ancient barbarians. The women, above all, manifested a lively and tender sympathy for Boule de Suif. The nuns, who appeared only at meals, cast down their eyes, and said nothing.

They dined, however, as soon as the first indignant outburst had subsided; but they spoke little, and thought much.

The ladies went to bed early; and the men, having lighted their pipes, proposed a game of *écarté*, in which Monsieur Follenvie was invited to join, the travellers hoping to question him skillfully as to the best means of vanquishing the officer's obduracy. But he thought of nothing but his cards, would listen to nothing, reply to nothing, and repeated, time after time: "Attend to the game, gentlemen! attend to the game!" So absorbed was his attention that he even forgot to expectorate. The consequence was that his chest gave forth rumbling sounds like those of an organ. His wheezing lungs struck every note of the asthmatic scale, from deep, hollow tones to a shrill, hoarse piping resembling that of a young cock trying to crow.

He refused to go to bed when his wife, overcome with sleep, came to fetch him. So she went off alone, for she was an early bird, always up with the sun; while he was addicted to late hours, ever ready to spend the night with friends. He merely said: "Put my egg-nogg by the fire," and went on with the game. When the other men saw that nothing was to be got out of him they declared it was time to retire, and each sought his bed.

They rose fairly early the next morning, with a vague hope of being allowed to start, a greater desire than

ever to do so, and a terror at having to spend another day in this wretched little inn.

Alas! the horses remained in the stable, the driver was invisible. They spent their time, for want of something better to do, in wandering round the coach.

Luncheon was a gloomy affair; and there was a general coolness toward Boule de Suif, for night, which brings counsel, had somewhat modified the judgment of her companions. In the cold light of the morning they almost bore a grudge against the girl for not having secretly sought out the Prussian, that the rest of the party might receive a joyful surprise when they awoke. What more simple? Besides, who would have been the wiser? She might have saved appearances by telling the officer that she had taken pity on their distress. Such a step would be of so little consequence to her.

But no one as yet confessed to such thoughts.

In the afternoon, seeing that they were all bored to death, the count proposed a walk in the neighborhood of the village. Each one wrapped himself up well, and the little party set out, leaving behind only Cornudet, who preferred to sit over the fire, and the two nuns, who were in the habit of spending their day in the church or at the presbytery.

The cold, which grew more intense each day, almost froze the noses and ears of the pedestrians, their feet began to pain them so that each step was a penance, and when they reached the open country it looked so mournful and depressing in its limitless mantle of white that they all hastily retraced their steps, with bodies benumbed and hearts heavy.

The four women walked in front, and the three men followed a little in their rear.

Loiseau, who saw perfectly well how matters stood, asked suddenly "if that trollop were going to keep them waiting much longer in this God-forsaken spot." The count, always courteous, replied that they could not exact so painful a sacrifice from any woman, and that the first move must come from herself. Monsieur Carré-Lamadon remarked that if the French, as they talked of doing, made a counter attack by way of Dieppe, their encounter with the enemy must inevitably take place at Tôtes. This reflection made the other two anxious.

"Supposing we escape on foot?" said Loiseau.

The count shrugged his shoulders.

"How can you think of such a thing, in this snow? And with our wives? Besides, we should be pursued at once, overtaken in ten minutes, and brought back as prisoners at the mercy of the soldiery."

This was true enough; they were silent.

The ladies talked of dress, but a certain constraint seemed to prevail among them.

Suddenly, at the end of the street, the officer appeared. His tall, wasplike, uniformed figure was outlined against the snow which bounded the horizon, and he walked, knees apart, with that motion peculiar to soldiers, who are always anxious not to soil their carefully polished boots.

He bowed as he passed the ladies, then glanced scornfully at the men, who had sufficient dignity not to raise their hats, though Loiseau made a movement to do so.

Boule de Suif flushed crimson to the ears, and the three married women felt unutterably humiliated at being met thus by the soldier in company with the girl whom he had treated with such scant ceremony.

Then they began to talk about him, his figure, and his face. Madame Carré-Lamadon, who had known many

officers and judged them as a connoisseur, thought him not at all bad-looking; she even regretted that he was not a Frenchman, because in that case he would have made a very handsome hussar, with whom all the women would assuredly have fallen in love.

When they were once more within doors they did not know what to do with themselves. Sharp words even were exchanged apropos of the merest trifles. The silent dinner was quickly over, and each one went to bed early in the hope of sleeping, and thus killing time.

They came down next morning with tired faces and irritable tempers; the women scarcely spoke to Boule de Suif.

A church bell summoned the faithful to a baptism. Boule de Suif had a child being brought up by peasants at Yvetot. She did not see him once a year, and never thought of him; but the idea of the child who was about to be baptized induced a sudden wave of tenderness for her own, and she insisted on being present at the ceremony.

As soon as she had gone out, the rest of the company looked at one another and then drew their chairs together; for they realized that they must decide on some course of action. Loiseau had an inspiration: he proposed that they should ask the officer to detain Boule de Suif only, and to let the rest depart on their way.

Monsieur Follenvie was intrusted with this commission, but he returned to them almost immediately. The German, who knew human nature, had shown him the door. He intended to keep all the travellers until his condition had been complied with.

Whereupon Madame Loiseau's vulgar temperament broke bounds.

"We're not going to die of old age here!" she cried.

"Since it's that vixen's trade to behave so with men I don't see that she has any right to refuse one more than another. I may as well tell you she took any lovers she could get at Rouen—even coachmen! Yes, indeed, madame—the coachman at the prefecture! I know it for a fact, for he buys his wine of us. And now that it is a question of getting us out of a difficulty she puts on virtuous airs, the drab! For my part, I think this officer has behaved very well. Why, there were three others of us, any one of whom he would undoubtedly have preferred. But no, he contents himself with the girl who is common property. He respects married women. Just think. He is master here. He had only to say: 'I wish it!' and he might have taken us by force, with the help of his soldiers."

The two other women shuddered; the eyes of pretty Madame Carré-Lamadon glistened, and she grew pale, as if the officer were indeed in the act of laying violent hands on her.

The men, who had been discussing the subject among themselves, drew near. Loiseau, in a state of furious resentment, was for delivering up "that miserable woman," bound hand and foot, into the enemy's power. But the count, descended from three generations of ambassadors, and endowed, moreover, with the lineaments of a diplomat, was in favor of more tactful measures.

"We must persuade her," he said.

Then they laid their plans.

The women drew together; they lowered their voices, and the discussion became general, each giving his or her opinion. But the conversation was not in the least coarse. The ladies, in particular, were adepts at delicate phrases and charming subtleties of expression to describe the most improper things. A stranger would

have understood none of their allusions, so guarded was the language they employed. But, seeing that the thin veneer of modesty with which every woman of the world is furnished goes but a very little way below the surface, they began rather to enjoy this unedifying episode, and at bottom were hugely delighted—feeling themselves in their element, furthering the schemes of lawless love with the gusto of a gourmand cook who prepares supper for another.

Their gaiety returned of itself, so amusing at last did the whole business seem to them. The count uttered several rather risky witticisms, but so tactfully were they said that his audience could not help smiling. Loiseau in turn made some considerably broader jokes, but no one took offence; and the thought expressed with such brutal directness by his wife was uppermost in the minds of all: "Since it's the girl's trade, why should she refuse this man more than another?" Dainty Madame Carré-Lamadon seemed to think even that in Boule de Suif's place she would be less inclined to refuse him than another.

The blockade was as carefully arranged as if they were investing a fortress. Each agreed on the rôle which he or she was to play, the arguments to be used, the maneuvers to be executed. They decided on the plan of campaign, the stratagems they were to employ, and the surprise attacks which were to reduce this human citadel and force it to receive the enemy within its walls.

But Cornudet remained apart from the rest, taking no share in the plot.

So absorbed was the attention of all that Boule de Suif's entrance was almost unnoticed. But the count whispered a gentle "Hush!" which made the others look

up. She was there. They suddenly stopped talking, and a vague embarrassment prevented them for a few moments from addressing her. But the countess, more practiced than the others in the wiles of the drawing-room, asked her:

"Was the baptism interesting?"

The girl, still under the stress of emotion, told what she had seen and heard, described the faces, the attitudes of those present, and even the appearance of the church. She concluded with the words:

"It does one good to pray sometimes."

Until lunch time the ladies contented themselves with being pleasant to her, so as to increase her confidence and make her amenable to their advice.

As soon as they took their seats at table the attack began. First they opened a vague conversation on the subject of self-sacrifice. Ancient examples were quoted: Judith and Holofernes; then, irrationally enough, Lucrece and Sextus; Cleopatra and the hostile generals whom she reduced to abject slavery by a surrender of her charms. Next was recounted an extraordinary story, born of the imagination of these ignorant millionaires, which told how the matrons of Rome seduced Hannibal, his lieutenants, and all his mercenaries at Capua. They held up to admiration all those women who from time to time have arrested the victorious progress of conquerors, made of their bodies a field of battle, a means of ruling, a weapon; who have vanquished by their heroic caresses hideous or detested beings, and sacrificed their chastity to vengeance and devotion.

All was said with due restraint and regard for propriety, the effect heightened now and then by an outburst of forced enthusiasm calculated to excite emulation.

A listener would have thought at last that the one

rôle of woman on earth was a perpetual sacrifice of her person, a continual abandonment of herself to the caprices of a hostile soldiery.

The two nuns seemed to hear nothing, and to be lost in thought. Boule de Suif also was silent.

During the whole afternoon she was left to her reflections. But instead of calling her "madame" as they had done hitherto, her companions addressed her simply as "mademoiselle," without exactly knowing why, but as if desirous of making her descend a step in the esteem she had won, and forcing her to realize her degraded position.

Just as soup was served, Monsieur Follenvie reappeared, repeating his phrase of the evening before:

"The Prussian officer sends to ask if Mademoiselle Elisabeth Rousset has changed her mind."

Boule de Suif answered briefly:

"No, monsieur."

But at dinner the coalition weakened. Loiseau made three unfortunate remarks. Each was cudgeling his brains for further examples of self-sacrifice, and could find none, when the countess, possibly without ulterior motive, and moved simply by a vague desire to do homage to religion, began to question the elder of the two nuns on the most striking facts in the lives of the saints. Now, it fell out that many of these had committed acts which would be crimes in our eyes, but the Church readily pardons such deeds when they are accomplished for the glory of God or the good of mankind. This was a powerful argument, and the countess made the most of it. Then, whether by reason of a tacit understanding, a thinly veiled act of complaisance such as those who wear the ecclesiastical habit excel in, or whether merely as the result of sheer stupidity—a stu-

pidity admirably adapted to further their designs—the old nun rendered formidable aid to the conspirators. They had thought her timid; she proved herself bold, talkative, bigoted. She was not troubled by the ins and outs of casuistry; her doctrines were as iron bars; her faith knew no doubt; her conscience no scruples. She looked on Abraham's sacrifice as natural enough, for she herself would not have hesitated to kill both father and mother if she had received a divine order to that effect; and nothing, in her opinion, could displease our Lord, provided the motive were praiseworthy. The countess, putting to good use the consecrated authority of her unexpected ally, led her on to make a lengthy and edifying paraphrase of that axiom enunciated by a certain school of moralists: "The end justifies the means."

"Then, sister," she asked, "you think God accepts all methods, and pardons the act when the motive is pure?"

"Undoubtedly, madame. An action reprehensible in itself often derives merit from the thought which inspires it."

And in this wise they talked on, fathoming the wishes of God, predicting His judgments, describing Him as interested in matters which assuredly concern Him but little.

All was said with the utmost care and discretion, but every word uttered by the holy woman in her nun's garb weakened the indignant resistance of the courtesan. Then the conversation drifted somewhat, and the nun began to talk of the convents of her order, of her Superior, of herself, and of her fragile little neighbor, Sister St. Nicéphore. They had been sent for from Havre to nurse the hundreds of soldiers who were in hospitals, stricken with smallpox. She described these wretched invalids and their malady. And, while they

themselves were detained on their way by the caprices of the Prussian officer, scores of Frenchmen might be dying, whom they would otherwise have saved! For the nursing of soldiers was the old nun's specialty; she had been in the Crimea, in Italy, in Austria; and as she told the story of her campaigns she revealed herself as one of those holy sisters of the fife and drum who seem designed by nature to follow camps, to snatch the wounded from amid the strife of battle, and to quell with a word, more effectually than any general, the rough and insubordinate troopers—a masterful woman, her seamed and pitted face itself an image of the devastations of war.

No one spoke when she had finished for fear of spoiling the excellent effect of her words.

As soon as the meal was over the travellers retired to their rooms, whence they emerged the following day at a late hour of the morning.

Luncheon passed off quietly. The seed sown the preceding evening was being given time to germinate and bring forth fruit.

In the afternoon the countess proposed a walk; then the count, as had been arranged beforehand, took Boule de Suif's arm, and walked with her at some distance behind the rest.

He began talking to her in that familiar, paternal, slightly contemptuous tone which men of his class adopt in speaking to women like her, calling her "my dear child," and talking down to her from the height of his exalted social position and stainless reputation. He came straight to the point.

"So you prefer to leave us here, exposed like yourself to all the violence which would follow on a repulse of the Prussian troops, rather than consent to surrender

yourself, as you have done so many times in your life?"

The girl did not reply.

He tried kindness, argument, sentiment. He still bore himself as count, even while adopting, when desirable, an attitude of gallantry, and making pretty—nay, even tender—speeches. He exalted the service she would render them, spoke of their gratitude; then, suddenly, using the familiar "thou":

"And you know, my dear, he could boast then of having made a conquest of a pretty girl such as he won't often find in his own country."

Boule de Suif did not answer, and joined the rest of the party.

As soon as they returned she went to her room, and was seen no more. The general anxiety was at its height. What would she do? If she still resisted, how awkward for them all!

The dinner hour struck; they waited for her in vain. At last Monsieur Follenvie entered, announcing that Mademoiselle Rousset was not well, and that they might sit down to table. They all pricked up their ears. The count drew near the innkeeper, and whispered:

"Is it all right?"

"Yes."

Out of regard for propriety he said nothing to his companions, but merely nodded slightly toward them. A great sigh of relief went up from all breasts; every face was lighted up with joy.

"By Gad!" shouted Loiseau, "I'll stand champagne all round if there's any to be found in this place." And great was Madame Loiseau's dismay when the proprietor came back with four bottles in his hands. They had all suddenly become talkative and merry; a lively joy filled all hearts. The count seemed to perceive for

the first time that Madame Carré-Lamadon was charming; the manufacturer paid compliments to the countess. The conversation was animated, sprightly, witty, and, although many of the jokes were in the worst possible taste, all the company were amused by them, and none offended—indignation being dependent, like other emotions, on surroundings. And the mental atmosphere had gradually become filled with gross imaginings and unclean thoughts.

At dessert even the women indulged in discreetly worded allusions. Their glances were full of meaning; they had drunk much. The count, who even in his moments of relaxation preserved a dignified demeanor, hit on a much-appreciated comparison of the condition of things with the termination of a winter spent in the icy solitude of the North Pole and the joy of shipwrecked mariners who at last perceive a southward track opening out before their eyes.

Loiseau, fairly in his element, rose to his feet, holding aloft a glass of champagne.

"I drink to our deliverance!" he shouted.

All stood up, and greeted the toast with acclamation. Even the two good sisters yielded to the solicitations of the ladies, and consented to moisten their lips with the foaming wine, which they had never before tasted. They declared it was like effervescent lemonade, but with a pleasanter flavor.

"It is a pity," said Loiseau, "that we have no piano; we might have had a quadrille."

Cornudet had not spoken a word or made a movement; he seemed plunged in serious thought, and now and then tugged furiously at his great beard, as if trying to add still further to its length. At last, toward midnight, when they were about to separate, Loiseau, whose

gait was far from steady, suddenly slapped him on the back, saying thickly:

"You're not jolly to-night; why are you so silent, old man?"

Cornudet threw back his head, cast one swift and scornful glance over the assemblage, and answered:

"I tell you all, you have done an infamous thing!"

He rose, reached the door, and repeating: "Infamous!" disappeared.

A chill fell on all. Loiseau himself looked foolish and disconcerted for a moment, but soon recovered his aplomb, and, writhing with laughter, exclaimed:

"Really, you are all too green for anything!"

Pressed for an explanation, he related the "mysteries of the corridor," whereat his listeners were hugely amused. The ladies could hardly contain their delight. The count and Monsieur Carré-Lamadon laughed till they cried. They could scarcely believe their ears.

"What! you are sure? He wanted——"

"I tell you I saw it with my own eyes."

"And she refused?"

"Because the Prussian was in the next room!"

"Surely you are mistaken?"

"I swear I'm telling you the truth."

The count was choking with laughter. The manufacturer held his sides. Loiseau continued:

"So you may well imagine he doesn't think this evening's business at all amusing."

And all three began to laugh again, choking, coughing, almost ill with merriment.

Then they separated. But Madame Loiseau, who was nothing if not spiteful, remarked to her husband as they were on the way to bed that "that stuck-up little

minx of a Carré-Lamadon had laughed on the wrong side of her mouth all the evening."

"You know," she said, "when women run after uniforms it's all the same to them whether the men who wear them are French or Prussian. It's perfectly sickening!"

The next morning the snow showed dazzling white under a clear winter sun. The coach, ready at last, waited before the door; while a flock of white pigeons, with pink eyes spotted in the centres with black, puffed out their white feathers and walked sedately between the legs of the six horses, picking at the steaming manure.

The driver, wrapped in his sheepskin coat, was smoking a pipe on the box, and all the passengers, radiant with delight at their approaching departure, were putting up provisions for the remainder of the journey.

They were waiting only for Boule de Suif. At last she appeared.

She seemed rather shamefaced and embarrassed, and advanced with timid step toward her companions, who with one accord turned aside as if they had not seen her. The count, with much dignity, took his wife by the arm, and removed her from the unclean contact.

The girl stood still, stupefied with astonishment; then, plucking up courage, accosted the manufacturer's wife with a humble "Good-morning, madame," to which the other replied merely with a slight and insolent nod, accompanied by a look of outraged virtue. Every one suddenly appeared extremely busy, and kept as far from Boule de Suif as if her skirts had been infected with some deadly disease. Then they hurried to the coach, followed by the despised courtesan, who, arriving last

of all, silently took the place she had occupied during the first part of the journey.

The rest seemed neither to see nor to know her—all save Madame Loiseau, who, glancing contemptuously in her direction, remarked, half aloud, to her husband:

“What a mercy I am not sitting beside that creature!”

The lumbering vehicle started on its way, and the journey began afresh.

At first no one spoke. Boule de Suif dared not even raise her eyes. She felt at once indignant with her neighbors, and humiliated at having yielded to the Prussian into whose arms they had so hypocritically cast her.

But the countess, turning toward Madame Carré-Lamadon, soon broke the painful silence:

“I think you know Madame d'Étrelles?”

“Yes; she is a friend of mine.”

“Such a charming woman!”

“Delightful! Exceptionally talented, and an artist to the finger tips. She sings marvellously and draws to perfection.”

The manufacturer was chatting with the count, and amid the clatter of the window-panes a word of their conversation was now and then distinguishable: “Shares—maturity—premium—time-limit.”

Loiseau, who had abstracted from the inn the time-worn pack of cards, thick with the grease of five years' contact with half-wiped-off tables, started a game of bezique with his wife.

The good sisters, taking up simultaneously the long rosaries hanging from their waists, made the sign of the cross, and began to mutter in unison interminable prayers, their lips moving ever more and more swiftly, as if they sought which should outdistance the other in the race of orisons; from time to time they kissed a

medal, and crossed themselves anew, then resumed their rapid and unintelligible murmur.

Cornudet sat still, lost in thought.

At the end of three hours Loiseau gathered up the cards, and remarked that he was hungry.

His wife thereupon produced a parcel tied with string, from which she extracted a piece of cold veal. This she cut into neat, thin slices, and both began to eat.

"We may as well do the same," said the countess. The rest agreed, and she unpacked the provisions which had been prepared for herself, the count, and the Carré-Lamadons. In one of those oval dishes, the lids of which are decorated with an earthenware hare, by way of showing that a game pie lies within, was a succulent delicacy consisting of the brown flesh of the game, larded with streaks of bacon and flavored with other meats chopped fine. A solid wedge of Gruyère cheese, which had been wrapped in a newspaper, bore the imprint: "Items of News," on its rich, oily surface.

The two good sisters brought to light a hunk of sausage smelling strongly of garlic; and Cornudet, plunging both hands at once into the capacious pockets of his loose overcoat, produced from one four hard-boiled eggs and from the other a crust of bread. He removed the shells, threw them into the straw beneath his feet, and began to devour the eggs, letting morsels of the bright yellow yolk fall in his mighty beard, where they looked like stars.

Boule de Suif, in the haste and confusion of her departure, had not thought of anything, and, stifling with rage, she watched all these people placidly eating. At first, ill-suppressed wrath shook her whole person, and she opened her lips to shriek the truth at them, to overwhelm them with a volley of insults; but she could

not utter a word, so choked was she with indignation.

No one looked at her, no one thought of her. She felt herself swallowed up in the scorn of these virtuous creatures, who had first sacrificed, then rejected her as a thing useless and unclean. Then she remembered her big basket full of the good things they had so greedily devoured: the two chickens coated in jelly, the pies, the pears, the four bottles of claret; and her fury broke forth like a cord that is overstrained, and she was on the verge of tears. She made terrible efforts at self-control, drew herself up, swallowed the sobs which choked her; but the tears rose nevertheless, shone at the brink of her eyelids, and soon two heavy drops coursed slowly down her cheeks. Others followed more quickly, like water filtering from a rock, and fell, one after another, on her rounded bosom. She sat upright, with a fixed expression, her face pale and rigid, hoping desperately that no one saw her give way.

But the countess noticed that she was weeping, and with a sign drew her husband's attention to the fact. He shrugged his shoulders, as if to say: "Well, what of it? It's not my fault." Madame Loiseau chuckled triumphantly, and murmured:

"She's weeping for shame."

The two nuns had betaken themselves once more to their prayers, first wrapping the remainder of their sausage in paper.

Then Cornudet, who was digesting his eggs, stretched his long legs under the opposite seat, threw himself back, folded his arms, smiled like a man who had just thought of a good joke, and began to whistle the *Marseillaise*.

The faces of his neighbors clouded; the popular air evidently did not find favor with them; they grew nervous and irritable, and seemed ready to howl as a dog

does at the sound of a barrel-organ. Cornudet saw the discomfort he was creating, and whistled the louder; sometimes he even hummed the words:

*Amour sacré de la patrie,
Conduis, soutiens, nos bras vengeurs,
Liberté, liberté chérie,
Combats avec tes défenseurs!*

The coach progressed more swiftly, the snow being harder now; and all the way to Dieppe, during the long, dreary hours of the journey, first in the gathering dusk, then in the thick darkness, raising his voice above the rumbling of the vehicle, Cornudet continued with fierce obstinacy his vengeful and monotonous whistling, forcing his weary and exasperated hearers to follow the song from end to end, to recall every word of every line, as each was repeated over and over again with untiring persistency.

And Boule de Suif still wept, and sometimes a sob she could not restrain was heard in the darkness between two verses of the song.

TWO LITTLE SOLDIERS

EVERY Sunday, as soon as they were free, the little soldiers would go for a walk. They turned to the right on leaving the barracks, crossed Courbevoie with rapid strides, as though on a forced march; then, as the houses grew scarcer, they slowed down and followed the dusty road which leads to Bezons.

They were small and thin, lost in their ill-fitting capes, too large and too long, whose sleeves covered their hands; their ample red trousers fell in folds around their ankles. Under the high, stiff shako one could just barely perceive two thin, hollow-cheeked Breton faces, with their calm, naïve blue eyes. They never spoke during their journey, going straight before them, the same idea in each one's mind taking the place of conversation. For at the entrance of the little forest of Champioux they had found a spot which reminded them of home, and they did not feel happy anywhere else.

At the crossing of the Colombes and Chatou roads, when they arrived under the trees, they would take off their heavy, oppressive headgear and wipe their foreheads.

They always stopped for a while on the bridge at Bezons, and looked at the Seine. They stood there several minutes, bending over the railing, watching the white sails, which perhaps reminded them of their home, and of the fishing smacks leaving for the open.

As soon as they had crossed the Seine, they would purchase provisions at the delicatessen, the baker's, and

the wine merchant's. A piece of bologna, four cents' worth of bread, and a quart of wine, made up the luncheon which they carried away, wrapped up in their handkerchiefs. But as soon as they were out of the village their gait would slacken and they would begin to talk.

Before them was a plain with a few clumps of trees, which led to the woods, a little forest which seemed to remind them of that other forest at Kermarivan. The wheat and oat fields bordered on the narrow path, and Jean Kerderen said each time to Luc Le Ganidec:

"It's just like home, just like Plounivon."

"Yes, it's just like home."

And they went on, side by side, their minds full of dim memories of home. They saw the fields, the hedges, the forests, and beaches.

Each time they stopped near a large stone on the edge of the private estate, because it reminded them of the dolmen of Locneuen.

As soon as they reached the first clump of trees, Luc Le Ganidec would cut off a small stick, and, whittling it slowly, would walk on, thinking of the folks at home.

Jean Kerderen carried the provisions.

From time to time Luc would mention a name, or allude to some boyish prank which would give them food for plenty of thought. And the home country, so dear and so distant, would little by little gain possession of their minds, sending them back through space, to the well-known forms and noises, to the familiar scenery, with the fragrance of its green fields and sea air. They no longer noticed the smells of the city. And in their dreams they saw their friends leaving, perhaps forever, for the dangerous fishing grounds.

They were walking slowly, Luc Le Ganidec and Jean

Kerderen, contented and sad, haunted by a sweet sorrow, the slow and penetrating sorrow of a captive animal which remembers the days of its freedom.

And when Luc had finished whittling his stick, they came to a little nook, where every Sunday they took their meal. They found the two bricks, which they had hidden in a hedge, and they made a little fire of dry branches and roasted their sausages on the ends of their knives.

When their last crumb of bread had been eaten and the last drop of wine had been drunk, they stretched themselves out on the grass side by side, without speaking, their half-closed eyes looking away in the distance, their hands clasped as in prayer, their red-trousered legs mingling with the bright colors of the wild flowers.

Towards noon they glanced, from time to time, towards the village of Bezons, for the dairy maid would soon be coming. Every Sunday she would pass in front of them on the way to milk her cow, the only cow in the neighborhood which was sent out to pasture.

Soon they would see the girl, coming through the fields, and it pleased them to watch the sparkling sunbeams reflected from her shining pail. They never spoke of her. They were just glad to see her, without understanding why.

She was a tall, strapping girl, freckled and tanned by the open air—a girl typical of the Parisian suburbs.

Once, on noticing that they were always sitting in the same place, she said to them:

“Do you always come here?”

Luc Le Ganidec, more daring than his friend, stammered:

“Yes, we come here for our rest.”

That was all. But the following Sunday, on seeing them, she smiled with the kindly smile of a woman who understood their shyness, and she asked:

"What are you doing here? Are you watching the grass grow?"

Luc, cheered up, smiled: "P'raps."

She continued: "It's not growing fast, is it?"

He answered, still laughing: "Not exactly."

She went on. But when she came back with her pail full of milk, she stopped before them and said:

"Want some? It will remind you of home."

She had, perhaps instinctively, guessed and touched the right spot.

Both were moved. Then, not without difficulty, she poured some milk into the bottle in which they had brought their wine. Luc started to drink, carefully watching lest he should take more than his share. Then he passed the bottle to Jean. She stood before them, her hands on her hips, her pail at her feet, enjoying the pleasure that she was giving them. Then she went on, saying: "Well, bye-bye until next Sunday!"

For a long time they watched her tall form as it receded in the distance, blending with the background, and finally disappeared.

The following week as they left the barracks, Jean said to Luc:

"Don't you think we ought to buy her something good?"

They were sorely perplexed by the problem of choosing something to bring to the dairy maid. Luc was in favor of bringing her some chitterlings; but Jean, who had a sweet tooth, thought that candy would be the best thing. He won, and so they went to a grocery to buy two sous' worth of red and white candies.

This time they ate more quickly than usual, excited by anticipation.

Jean was the first one to notice her. "There she is," he said; and Luc answered: "Yes, there she is."

She smiled when she saw them, and cried:

"Well, how are you to-day?"

They both answered together:

"All right! How's everything with you?"

Then she started to talk of simple things which might interest them; of the weather, of the crops, of her masters.

They didn't dare to offer their candies, which were slowly melting in Jean's pocket. Finally Luc, growing bolder, murmured:

"We have brought you something."

She asked: "Let's see it."

Then Jean, blushing to the tips of his ears, reached in his pocket, and drawing out the little paper bag, handed it to her.

She began to eat the little sweet dainties. The two soldiers sat in front of her, moved and delighted.

At last she went to do her milking, and when she came back she again gave them some milk.

They thought of her all through the week and often spoke of her. The following Sunday she sat beside them for a longer time.

The three of them sat there, side by side, their eyes looking far away in the distance, their hands clasped over their knees, and they told each other little incidents and little details of the villages where they were born, while the cow, waiting to be milked, stretched her heavy head toward the girl and mooed.

Soon the girl consented to eat with them, and to take a sip of wine. Often she brought them plums in her pocket,

for plums were now ripe. Her presence enlivened the little Breton soldiers, who chattered away like two birds.

One Tuesday something unusual happened to Luc Le Ganidec; he asked for leave and did not return until ten o'clock at night.

Jean worried and racked his brain to account for his friend's having obtained leave.

The following Friday, Luc borrowed ten sous from one of his friends, and once more asked and obtained leave for several hours.

When he started out with Jean on Sunday he seemed queer, disturbed, changed. Kerderen did not understand; he vaguely suspected something, but he could not guess what it might be.

They went straight to the usual place, and lunched slowly. Neither was hungry.

Soon the girl appeared. They watched her approach as they always did. When she was near, Luc arose and went towards her. She placed her pail on the ground and kissed him. She kissed him passionately, throwing her arms around his neck, without paying attention to Jean, without even noticing that he was there.

Poor Jean was dazed, so dazed that he could not understand. His mind was upset and his heart broken, without his even realizing why.

Then the girl sat down beside Luc, and they started to chat.

Jean was not looking at them. He understood now why his friend had gone out twice during the week. He felt the pain and the sting which treachery and deceit leave in their wake.

Luc and the girl went together to attend to the cow.

Jean followed them with his eyes. He saw them dis-

appear side by side, the red trousers of his friend making a scarlet spot against the white road. It was Luc who sank the stake to which the cow was tethered. The girl stooped down to milk the cow, while he absent-mindedly stroked the animal's glossy neck. Then they left the pail in the grass and disappeared in the woods.

Jean could no longer see anything but the wall of leaves through which they had passed. He was unmanned so that he did not have strength to stand. He stayed there, motionless, bewildered and grieving—simple, passionate grief. He wanted to weep, to run away, to hide somewhere, never to see anyone again.

Then he saw them coming back again. They were walking slowly, hand in hand, as village lovers do. Luc was carrying the pail.

After kissing him again, the girl went on, nodding carelessly to Jean. She did not offer him any milk that day.

The two little soldiers sat side by side, motionless as always, silent and quiet, their calm faces in no way betraying the trouble in their hearts. The sun shone down on them. From time to time they could hear the plaintive lowing of the cow. At the usual time they arose to return.

Luc was whittling a stick. Jean carried the empty bottle. He left it at the wine merchant's in Bezons. Then they stopped on the bridge, as they did every Sunday, and watched the water flowing by.

Jean leaned over the railing, farther and farther, as though he had seen something in the stream which hypnotized him. Luc said to him:

"What's the matter? Do you want a drink?"

He had hardly said the last word when Jean's head carried away the rest of his body, and the little blue

and red soldier fell like a shot and disappeared in the water.

Luc, paralyzed with horror, tried vainly to shout for help. In the distance he saw something move; then his friend's head bobbed up out of the water only to disappear again.

Farther down he again noticed a hand, just one hand, which appeared and again went out of sight. That was all.

The boatmen who had rushed to the scene found no body that day.

Luc ran back to the barracks, crazed, and with eyes and voice full of tears, he related the accident: "He leaned—he—he was leaning—so far over—that his head carried him away—and—he—fell—he fell——"

Emotion choked him so that he could say no more. If he had only known!

FATHER MILON

FOR a month the hot sun has been parching the fields. Nature is expanding beneath its rays; the fields are green as far as the eye can see. The big azure dome of the sky is unclouded. The farms of Normandy, scattered over the plains and surrounded by a belt of tall beeches, look, from a distance, like little woods. On closer view, after lowering the worm-eaten wooden bars, you imagine yourself in an immense garden, for all the ancient apple trees, gnarled as the peasants themselves, are in bloom. The sweet scent of their blossoms mingles with the heavy smell of the earth and the penetrating odor of the stables. It is noon. The family is eating under the shade of a pear tree planted in front of the door; father, mother, the four children, and the help—two women and three men—are all there. All are silent. The soup is eaten and then a dish of potatoes fried with bacon is brought on.

From time to time one of the women gets up and takes a pitcher down to the cellar to fetch more cider.

The man, a big fellow about forty years old, is watching a grape vine, still bare, which is winding and twisting like a snake along the side of the house.

At last he says: "Father's vine is budding early this year. Perhaps we may get something from it."

The woman then turns round and looks, without saying a word.

This vine is planted on the spot where their father had been shot.

It was during the war of 1870. The Prussians were occupying the whole country. General Faidherbe, with the Northern Division of the army, was opposing them.

The Prussians had established their headquarters at this farm. The old farmer to whom it belonged, Father Pierre Milon, had received and quartered them to the best of his ability.

For a month the German vanguard had been in this village. The French remained motionless, ten leagues away; and yet, every night, some of the Uhlans disappeared.

Of all the isolated scouts, of all those who were sent to the outposts, in groups of not more than three, not one ever returned.

They were picked up the next morning in a field or in a ditch. Even their horses were found along the roads with their throats cut.

These murders seemed to be done by the same men, who could never be found.

The country was terrorized. Farmers were shot on suspicion, women were imprisoned; children were frightened in order to try and obtain information. Nothing could be ascertained.

But, one morning, Father Milon was found stretched out in the barn, with a sword gash across his face.

Two Uhlans were found dead about a mile and a half from the farm. One of them was still holding his bloody sword in his hand. He had fought, tried to defend himself. A court-martial was immediately held in the open air, in front of the farm. The old man was brought before it.

He was sixty-eight years old, small, thin, bent, with two big hands resembling the claws of a crab. His colorless hair was sparse and thin, like the down of a young

duck, allowing patches of his scalp to be seen. The brown and wrinkled skin of his neck showed big veins which disappeared behind his jaws and came out again at the temples. He had the reputation of being miserly and hard to deal with.

They stood him up between four soldiers, in front of the kitchen table, which had been dragged outside. Five officers and the colonel seated themselves opposite him.

The colonel spoke in French:

"Father Milon, since we have been here we have only had praise for you. You have always been obliging and even attentive to us. But to-day a terrible accusation is hanging over you, and you must clear the matter up. How did you receive that wound on your face?"

The peasant answered nothing.

The colonel continued:

"Your silence accuses you, Father Milon. But I want you to answer me! Do you understand? Do you know who killed the two Uhlans who were found this morning near Calvaire?"

The old man answered clearly:

"I did."

The colonel, surprised, was silent for a minute, looking straight at the prisoner. Father Milon stood impassive, with the stupid look of the peasant, his eyes lowered as though he were talking to the priest. Just one thing betrayed an uneasy mind; he was continually swallowing his saliva, with a visible effort, as though his throat were terribly contracted.

The man's family, his son Jean, his daughter-in-law and his two grandchildren were standing a few feet behind him, bewildered and affrighted.

The colonel went on:

"Do you also know who killed all the scouts who have

been found dead, for a month, throughout the country, every morning?"

The old man answered with the same stupid look:

"I did."

"You killed them all?"

"Uh huh! I did."

"You alone? All alone?"

"Uh huh!"

"Tell me how you did it."

This time the man seemed moved; the necessity for talking any length of time annoyed him visibly. He stammered:

"I dunno! I simply did it."

The colonel continued:

"I warn you that you will have to tell me everything. You might as well make up your mind right away. How did you begin?"

The man cast a troubled look toward his family, standing close behind him. He hesitated a minute longer, and then suddenly made up his mind to obey the order.

"I was coming home one night at about ten o'clock, the night after you got here. You and your soldiers had taken more than fifty *écus* worth of forage from me, as well as a cow and two sheep. I said to myself: 'As much as they take from you, just so much will you make them pay back.' And then I had other things on my mind which I will tell you. Just then I noticed one of your soldiers who was smoking his pipe by the ditch behind the barn. I went and got my scythe and crept up slowly behind him, so that he couldn't hear me. And I cut his head off with one single blow, just as I would a blade of grass, before he could say 'Booh!' If you should look at the bottom of the pond,

you will find him tied up in a potato-sack, with a stone fastened to it.

"I got an idea. I took all his clothes, from his boots to his cap, and hid them away in the little wood behind the yard."

The old man stopped. The officers remained speechless, looking at each other. The questioning began again, and this is what they learned.

Once this murder committed, the man had lived with this one thought: "Kill the Prussians!" He hated them with the blind, fierce hate of the greedy yet patriotic peasant. He had his idea, as he said. He waited several days.

He was allowed to go and come as he pleased, because he had shown himself so humble, submissive and obliging to the invaders. Each night he saw the outposts leave. One night he followed them, having heard the name of the village to which the men were going, and having learned the few words of German which he needed for his plan through associating with the soldiers.

He left through the back yard, slipped into the woods, found the dead man's clothes and put them on. Then he began to crawl through the fields, following along the hedges in order to keep out of sight, listening to the slightest noises, as wary as a poacher.

As soon as he thought the time ripe, he approached the road and hid behind a bush. He waited for a while. Finally, toward midnight, he heard the sound of a galloping horse. The man put his ear to the ground in order to make sure that only one horseman was approaching, then he got ready.

An Uhlan came galloping along, carrying despatches.

As he went, he was all eyes and ears. When he was only a few feet away, Father Milon dragged himself across the road, moaning: "*Hilfe! Hilfe!*" (Help! Help!). The horseman stopped, and recognizing a German, he thought he was wounded and dismounted, coming nearer without any suspicion, and just as he was leaning over the unknown man, he received, in the pit of his stomach, a heavy thrust from the long curved blade of the sabre. He dropped without suffering pain, quivering only in the final throes. Then the farmer, radiant with the silent joy of an old peasant, got up again, and, for his own pleasure, cut the dead man's throat. He then dragged the body to the ditch and threw it in.

The horse quietly awaited its master. Father Milon mounted him and started galloping across the plains.

About an hour later he noticed two more Uhlans who were returning home, side by side. He rode straight for them, once more crying "*Hilfe! Hilfe!*" The Prussians, recognizing the uniform, let him approach without distrust. The old man passed between them like a cannon-ball, felling them both, one with his sabre and the other with a revolver.

Then he killed the horses, German horses! After that he quickly returned to the woods and hid one of the horses. He left his uniform there and again put on his old clothes; then going back into bed, he slept until morning.

For four days he did not go out, waiting for the inquest to be terminated; but on the fifth day he went out again and killed two more soldiers by the same stratagem. From that time on he did not stop. Each night he wandered about in search of adventure, killing Prussians, sometimes here and sometimes there, gallop-

ing through deserted fields, in the moonlight, a lost Uhlan, a hunter of men. Then, his task accomplished, leaving behind him the bodies lying along the roads, the old farmer would return and hide his horse and uniform.

He went, toward noon, to carry oats and water quietly to his mount, and he fed it well as he required from it a great amount of work.

But one of those whom he had attacked the night before, in defending himself slashed the old peasant across the face with his sabre.

However, he had killed them both. He had come back and hidden the horse and put on his ordinary clothes again; but as he reached home he began to feel faint, and had dragged himself as far as the stable, being unable to reach the house.

They had found him there, bleeding, on the straw.

When he had finished his tale, he suddenly lifted up his head and looked proudly at the Prussian officers.

The colonel, who was gnawing at his mustache, asked: "You have nothing else to say?"

"Nothing more; I have finished my task; I killed sixteen, not one more or less."

"Do you know that you are going to die?"

"I haven't asked for mercy."

"Have you been a soldier?"

"Yes, I served my time. And then, you had killed my father, who was a soldier of the first Emperor. And last month you killed my youngest son, François, near Evreux. I owed you one for that; I paid. We are quits."

The officers were looking at each other.

The old man continued:

"Eight for my father, eight for the boy—we are quits.

I didn't seek any quarrel with you. I don't know you. I don't even know where you come from. And here you are, ordering me about in my home as though it were your own. I took my revenge upon the others. I'm not sorry."

And, straightening up his bent back, the old man folded his arms in the attitude of a modest hero.

The Prussians talked in a low tone for a long time. One of them, a captain, who had also lost his son the previous month, was defending the poor wretch. Then the colonel arose and, approaching Father Milon, said in a low voice:

"Listen, old man, there is perhaps a way of saving your life, it is to——"

But the man was not listening, and, his eyes fixed on the hated officer, while the wind played with the downy hair on his head, he distorted his slashed face, giving it a truly terrible expression, and, swelling out his chest, he spat, as hard as he could, right in the Prussian's face.

The colonel, furious, raised his hand, and for the second time the man spat in his face.

All the officers had jumped up and were shrieking orders at the same time.

In less than a minute the old man, still impassive, was pushed up against the wall and shot, looking smilingly the while toward Jean, his eldest son, his daughter-in-law and his two grandchildren, who witnessed this scene in dumb terror.

MONSIEUR PARENT

GEORGE'S father was sitting in an iron chair, watching his little son with concentrated affection and attention, as little George piled up the sand into heaps during one of their walks. He would take up the sand with both hands, make a mound of it, and put a chestnut leaf on top. His father saw no one but him in that public park full of people.

The sun was just disappearing behind the roofs of the Rue Saint-Lazare, but still shed its rays obliquely on that little, overdressed crowd. The chestnut trees were lighted up by its yellow rays, and the three fountains before the lofty porch of the church had the appearance of liquid silver.

Monsieur Parent, accidentally looking up at the church clock, saw that he was five minutes late. He got up, took the child by the arm, shook his dress, which was covered with sand, wiped his hands, and led him in the direction of the Rue Blanche. He walked quickly, so as not to get in after his wife, and the child could not keep up with him. He took him up and carried him, though it made him pant when he had to walk up the steep street. He was a man of forty, already turning gray, and rather stout.

At last he reached his house. An old servant who had brought him up, one of those trusted servants who are the tyrants of families, opened the door to him.

"Has madame come in yet?" he asked anxiously.

The servant shrugged her shoulders:

"When have you ever known madame to come home at half-past six, monsieur?"

"Very well; all the better; it will give me time to change my things, for I am very warm."

The servant looked at him with angry and contemptuous pity. "Oh, I can see that well enough," she grumbled. "You are covered with perspiration, monsieur. I suppose you walked quickly and carried the child, and only to have to wait until half-past seven, perhaps, for madame. I have made up my mind not to have dinner ready on time. I shall get it for eight o'clock, and if you have to wait, I cannot help it; roast meat ought not to be burnt!"

Monsieur Parent pretended not to hear, but went into his own room, and as soon as he got in, locked the door, so as to be alone, quite alone. He was so used now to being abused and badly treated that he never thought himself safe except when he was locked in.

What could he do? To get rid of Julie seemed to him such a formidable thing to do that he hardly ventured to think of it, but it was just as impossible to uphold her against his wife, and before another month the situation would become unbearable between the two. He remained sitting there, with his arms hanging down, vaguely trying to discover some means to set matters straight, but without success. He said to himself: "It is lucky that I have George; without him I should be very miserable."

Just then the clock struck seven, and he started up. Seven o'clock, and he had not even changed his clothes. Nervous and breathless, he undressed, put on a clean shirt, hastily finished his toilet, as if he had been expected in the next room for some event of extreme importance, and went into the drawing-room, happy

at having nothing to fear. He glanced at the newspaper, went and looked out of the window, and then sat down again, when the door opened, and the boy came in, washed, brushed, and smiling. Parent took him up in his arms and kissed him passionately; then he tossed him into the air, and held him up to the ceiling, but soon sat down again, as he was tired with all his exertion. Then, taking George on his knee, he made him ride a-cock-horse. The child laughed and clapped his hands and shouted with pleasure, as did his father, who laughed until his big stomach shook, for it amused him almost more than it did the child.

Parent loved him with all the heart of a weak, resigned, ill-used man. He loved him with mad bursts of affection, with caresses and with all the bashful tenderness which was hidden in him, and which had never found an outlet, even at the early period of his married life, for his wife had always shown herself cold and reserved.

Just then Julie came to the door, with a pale face and glistening eyes, and said in a voice which trembled with exasperation: "It is half-past seven, monsieur."

Parent gave an uneasy and resigned look at the clock and replied: "Yes, it certainly is half-past seven."

"Well, my dinner is quite ready now."

Seeing the storm which was coming, he tried to turn it aside. "But did you not tell me when I came in that it would not be ready before eight?"

"Eight! what are you thinking about? You surely do not mean to let the child dine at eight o'clock? It would ruin his stomach. Just suppose that he only had his mother to look after him! She cares a great deal about her child. Oh, yes, we will speak about her; she

is a mother! What a pity it is that there should be any mothers like her!"

Parent thought it was time to cut short a threatened scene. "Julie," he said, "I will not allow you to speak like that of your mistress. You understand me, do you not? Do not forget it in the future."

The old servant, who was nearly choked with surprise, turned and went out, slamming the door so violently after her that the lustres on the chandelier rattled, and for some seconds it sounded as if a number of little invisible bells were ringing in the drawing-room.

Eight o'clock struck, the door opened, and Julie came in again. She had lost her look of exasperation, but now she put on an air of cold and determined resolution, which was still more formidable.

"Monsieur," she said, "I served your mother until the day of her death, and I have attended to you from your birth until now, and I think it may be said that I am devoted to the family." She waited for a reply, and Parent stammered:

"Why, yes, certainly, my good Julie."

"You know quite well," she continued, "that I have never done anything for the sake of money, but always for your sake; that I have never deceived you nor lied to you, that you have never had to find fault with me——"

"Certainly, my good Julie."

"Very well, then, monsieur; it cannot go on any longer like this. I have said nothing, and left you in your ignorance, out of respect and liking for you, but it is too much, and every one in the neighborhood is laughing at you. Everybody knows about it, and so I must tell you also, although I do not like to repeat it. The

reason why madame comes in at any time she chooses is that she is doing abominable things."

He seemed stupefied and not to understand, and could only stammer out: "Hold your tongue; you know I have forbidden you——"

But she interrupted him with irresistible resolution. "No, monsieur, I must tell you everything now. For a long time madame has been carrying on with Monsieur Limousin. I have seen them kiss scores of times behind the door. Ah! you may be sure that if Monsieur Limousin had been rich, madame would never have married Monsieur Parent. If you remember how the marriage was brought about, you would understand the matter from beginning to end."

Parent had risen, and stammered out, his face livid: "Hold your tongue—hold your tongue, or——"

She went on, however: "No, I mean to tell you everything. She married you from interest, and she deceived you from the very first day. It was all settled between them beforehand. You need only reflect for a few moments to understand it, and then, as she was not satisfied with having married you, as she did not love you, she has made your life miserable, so miserable that it has almost broken my heart when I have seen it."

He walked up and down the room with hands clenched, repeating: "Hold your tongue—hold your tongue——" For he could find nothing else to say. The old servant, however, would not yield; she seemed resolved on everything.

George, who had been at first astonished and then frightened at those angry voices, began to utter shrill screams, and remained behind his father, with his face puckered up and his mouth open, roaring.

His son's screams exasperated Parent, and filled him

with rage and courage. He rushed at Julie with both arms raised, ready to strike her, exclaiming: "Ah! you wretch. You will drive the child out of his senses." He already had his hand on her, when she screamed in his face:

"Monsieur, you may beat me if you like, me who reared you, but that will not prevent your wife from deceiving you, or alter the fact that your child is not yours——"

He stopped suddenly, let his arms fall, and remained standing opposite to her, so overwhelmed that he could understand nothing more.

"You need only to look at the child," she added, "to know who is its father! He is the very image of Monsieur Limousin. You need only look at his eyes and forehead. Why, a blind man could not be mistaken in him."

He had taken her by the shoulders, and was now shaking her with all his might. "Viper, viper!" he said. "Go out the room, viper! Go out, or I shall kill you! Go out! Go out!"

And with a desperate effort he threw her into the next room. She fell across the table, which was laid for dinner, breaking the glasses. Then, rising to her feet, she put the table between her master and herself. While he was pursuing her, in order to take hold of her again, she flung terrible words at him.

"You need only go out this evening after dinner, and come in again immediately, and you will see! You will see whether I have been lying! Just try it, and you will see." She had reached the kitchen door and escaped, but he ran after her, up the back stairs to her bedroom, into which she had locked herself, and knocking at the door, he said:

"You will leave my house this very instant!"

"You may be certain of that, monsieur," was her reply. "In an hour's time I shall not be here any longer."

He then went slowly downstairs again, holding on to the banister so as not to fall, and went back to the drawing-room, where little George was sitting on the floor, crying. He fell into a chair, and looked at the child with dull eyes. He understood nothing, knew nothing more; he felt dazed, stupefied, mad, as if he had just fallen on his head, and he scarcely even remembered the dreadful things the servant had told him. Then, by degrees, his mind, like muddy water, became calmer and clearer, and the abominable revelations began to work in his heart.

He was no longer thinking of George. The child was quiet now and sitting on the carpet; but, seeing that no notice was being taken of him, he began to cry. His father ran to him, took him in his arms, and covered him with kisses. His child remained to him, at any rate! What did the rest matter? He held him in his arms and pressed his lips to his light hair, and, relieved and composed, he whispered:

"George—my little George—my dear little George——" But he suddenly remembered what Julie had said! Yes, she had said that he was Limousin's child. Oh! it could not be possible, surely. He could not believe it, could not doubt, even for a moment, that he was his own child. It was one of those low scandals which spring from servants' brains! And he repeated: "George—my dear little George." The youngster was quiet again, now that his father was fondling him.

Parent felt the warmth of the little chest penetrate through his clothes, and it filled him with love, courage,

and happiness; that gentle warmth soothed him, fortified him and saved him. Then he put the small, curly head away from him a little, and looked at it affectionately, still repeating: "George! Oh, my little George!" But suddenly he thought: "Suppose he were to resemble Limousin, after all!"

He looked at him with haggard, troubled eyes, and tried to discover whether there was any likeness in his forehead, in his nose, mouth, or cheeks. His thoughts wandered as they do when a person is going mad, and his child's face changed in his eyes, and assumed a strange look and improbable resemblances.

The hall bell rang. Parent gave a bound as if a bullet had gone through him. "There she is," he said. "What shall I do?" And he ran and locked himself up in his room, to have time to bathe his eyes. But in a few moments another ring at the bell made him jump again, and then he remembered that Julie had left, without the housemaid knowing it, and so nobody would go to open the door. What was he to do? He went himself, and suddenly he felt brave, resolute, ready for dissimulation and the struggle. The terrible blow had matured him in a few moments. He wished to know the truth, he desired it with the rage of a timid man, and with the tenacity of an easy-going man who has been exasperated.

Nevertheless, he trembled. Does one know how much excited cowardice there often is in boldness? He went to the door with furtive steps, and stopped to listen; his heart beat furiously. Suddenly, however, the noise of the bell over his head startled him like an explosion. He seized the lock, turned the key, and opening the door, saw his wife and Limousin standing before him on the stairs.

With an air of astonishment, which also betrayed a little irritation, she said:

"So you open the door now? Where is Julie?"

His throat felt tight and his breathing was labored as he tried to reply, without being able to utter a word.

"Are you dumb?" she continued. "I asked you where Julie is?"

"She—she—has—gone——" he managed to stammer.

His wife began to get angry. "What do you mean by gone? Where has she gone? Why?" By degrees he regained his coolness. He felt an intense hatred rise up in him for that insolent woman who was standing before him.

"Yes, she has gone altogether. I sent her away."

"You have sent away Julie? Why, you must be mad."

"Yes, I sent her away because she was insolent, and because—because she was ill-using the child."

"Julie?"

"Yes—Julie."

"What was she insolent about?"

"About you."

"About me?"

"Yes, because the dinner was burnt, and you did not come in."

"And she said——"

"She said—offensive things about you—which I ought not—which I could not listen to——"

"What did she say?"

"It is no good repeating them."

"I want to hear them."

"She said it was unfortunate for a man like me to

be married to a woman like you, unpunctual, careless, disorderly, a bad mother, and a bad wife."

The young woman had gone into the anteroom, followed by Limousin, who did not say a word at this unexpected condition of things. She shut the door quickly, threw her cloak on a chair, and going straight up to her husband, she stammered out:

"You say? You say? That I am——"

Very pale and calm, he replied: "I say nothing, my dear. I am simply repeating what Julie said to me, as you wanted to know what it was, and I wish you to remark that I turned her off just on account of what she said."

She trembled with a violent longing to tear out his beard and scratch his face. In his voice and manner she felt that he was asserting his position as master. Although she had nothing to say by way of reply, she tried to assume the offensive by saying something unpleasant. "I suppose you have had dinner?" she asked.

"No, I waited for you."

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "It is very stupid of you to wait after half-past seven," she said. "You might have guessed that I was detained, that I had a good many things to do, visits and shopping."

And then, suddenly, she felt that she wanted to explain how she had spent her time, and told him in abrupt, haughty words that, having to buy some furniture in a shop a long distance off, very far off, in the Rue de Rennes, she had met Limousin at past seven o'clock on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, and that then she had gone with him to have something to eat in a restaurant, as she did not like to go to one by herself, although she was faint with hunger. That was how she had dined with Limousin, if it could be called dining,

for they had only some soup and half a chicken, as they were in a great hurry to get back.

Parent replied simply: "Well, you were quite right. I am not finding fault with you."

Then Limousin, who had not spoken till then, and who had been half hidden behind Henriette, came forward and put out his hand, saying: "Are you very well?"

Parent took his hand, and shaking it gently, replied: "Yes, I am very well."

But the young woman had felt a reproach in her husband's last words. "Finding fault! Why do you speak of finding fault? One might think that you meant to imply something."

"Not at all," he replied, by way of excuse. "I simply meant that I was not at all anxious although you were late, and that I did not find fault with you for it."

She, however, took the high hand, and tried to find a pretext for a quarrel. "Although I was late? One might really think that it was one o'clock in the morning, and that I spent my nights away from home."

"Certainly not, my dear. I said late because I could find no other word. You said you should be back at half-past six, and you returned at half-past eight. That was surely being late. I understand it perfectly well. I am not at all surprised, even. But—but—I can hardly use any other word."

"But you pronounce them as if I had been out all night."

"Oh, no—oh, no!"

She saw that he would yield on every point, and she was going into her own room, when at last she noticed that George was screaming, and then she asked, with some feeling: "What is the matter with the child?"

"I told you that Julie had been rather unkind to him."

"What has the wretch been doing to him?"

"Oh, nothing much. She gave him a push, and he fell down."

She wanted to see her child, and ran into the dining room, but stopped short at the sight of the table covered with spilt wine, with broken decanters and glasses and overturned saltcellars. "Who did all that mischief?" she asked.

"It was Julie, who——" But she interrupted him furiously:

"That is too much, really! Julie speaks of me as if I were a shameless woman, beats my child, breaks my plates and dishes, turns my house upside down, and it appears that you think it all quite natural."

"Certainly not, as I have got rid of her."

"Really! You have got rid of her! But you ought to have given her in charge. In such cases, one ought to call in the Commissary of Police!"

"But—my dear—I really could not. There was no reason. It would have been very difficult——"

She shrugged her shoulders disdainfully. "There! you will never be anything but a poor, wretched fellow, a man without a will, without any firmness or energy. Ah! she must have said some nice things to you, your Julie, to make you turn her off like that. I should like to have been here for a minute, only for a minute." Then she opened the drawing-room door and ran to George, took him into her arms and kissed him, and said: "Georgie, what is it, my darling, my pretty one, my treasure?"

Then, suddenly turning to another idea, she said:

"But the child has had no dinner? You have had nothing to eat, my pet?"

"No, mamma."

Then she again turned furiously upon her husband. "Why, you must be mad, utterly mad! It is half-past eight, and George has had no dinner!"

He excused himself as best he could, for he had nearly lost his wits through the overwhelming scene and the explanation, and felt crushed by this ruin of his life. "But, my dear, we were waiting for you, as I did not wish to dine without you. As you come home late every day, I expected you every moment."

She threw her bonnet, which she had kept on till then, into an easy-chair, and in an angry voice she said: "It is really intolerable to have to do with people who can understand nothing, who can divine nothing and do nothing by themselves. So, I suppose, if I were to come in at twelve o'clock at night, the child would have had nothing to eat? Just as if you could not have understood that, as it was after half-past seven, I was prevented from coming home, that I had met with some hindrance!"

Parent trembled, for he felt that his anger was getting the upper hand, but Limousin interposed, and turning toward the young woman, said:

"My dear friend, you are altogether unjust. Parent could not guess that you would come here so late, as you never do so, and then, how could you expect him to get over the difficulty all by himself, after having sent away Julie?"

But Henriette was very angry, and replied:

"Well, at any rate, he must get over the difficulty himself, for I will not help him," she replied. "Let him settle it!" And she went into her own room, quite

forgetting that her child had not had anything to eat.

Limousin immediately set to work to help his friend. He picked up the broken glasses which strewed the table and took them out, replaced the plates and knives and forks, and put the child into his high chair, while Parent went to look for the chambermaid to wait at table. The girl came in, in great astonishment, as she had heard nothing in George's room, where she had been working. She soon, however, brought in the soup, a burnt leg of mutton, and mashed potatoes.

Parent sat by the side of the child, very much upset and distressed at all that had happened. He gave the boy his dinner, and endeavored to eat something himself, but he could only swallow with an effort, as his throat felt paralyzed. By degrees he was seized with an insane desire to look at Limousin, who was sitting opposite to him, making bread pellets, to see whether George was like him, but he did not venture to raise his eyes for some time. At last, however, he made up his mind to do so, and gave a quick, sharp look at the face which he knew so well, although he almost fancied that he had never examined it carefully. It looked so different to what he had imagined. From time to time he looked at Limousin, trying to recognize a likeness in the smallest lines of his face, in the slightest features, and then he looked at his son, under the pretext of feeding him.

Two words were sounding in his ears: "His father! his father! his father!" They buzzed in his temples at every beat of his heart. Yes, that man, that tranquil man who was sitting on the other side of the table, was, perhaps, the father of his son, of George, of his little George. Parent left off eating; he could not swallow any more. A terrible pain, one of those attacks of

pain which make men scream, roll on the ground, and bite the furniture, was tearing at his entrails, and he felt inclined to take a knife and plunge it into his stomach.

He started when he heard the door open. His wife came in. "I am hungry," she said; "are not you, Limousin?"

He hesitated a little, and then said: "Yes, I am, upon my word."

She had the leg of mutton brought in again. Parent asked himself:

"Have they had dinner? Or are they late because they have had a lovers' meeting?"

They both ate with a very good appetite. Henriette was very calm, but laughed and joked. Her husband watched her furtively. She had on a pink teagown trimmed with white lace, and her fair head, her white neck and her plump hands stood out from that coquetish and perfumed dress as though it were a sea shell edged with foam.

What fun they must be making of him, if he had been their dupe since the first day! Was it possible to make a fool of a man, of a worthy man, because his father had left him a little money? Why could one not see into people's souls? How was it that nothing revealed to upright hearts the deceits of infamous hearts? How was it that voices had the same sound for adoring as for lying? Why was a false, deceptive look the same as a sincere one? And he watched them, waiting to catch a gesture, a word, an intonation. Then suddenly he thought: "I will surprise them this evening," and he said: "My dear, as I have dismissed Julie, I will see about getting another girl this very day. I will go

at once to procure one by to-morrow morning, so I may not be in until late."

"Very well," she replied; "go. I shall not stir from here. Limousin will keep me company. We will wait for you." Then, turning to the maid, she said: "You had better put George to bed, and then you can clear away and go up to your room."

Parent had got up; he was unsteady on his legs, dazed and bewildered, and saying, "I shall see you again later on," he went out, holding on to the wall, for the floor seemed to roll like a ship. George had been carried out by his nurse, while Henriette and Limousin went into the drawing-room.

As soon as the door was shut, he said: "You must be mad, surely, to torment your husband as you do?"

She immediately turned on him: "Ah! Do you know that I think the habit you have got into lately, of looking upon Parent as a martyr, is very unpleasant?"

Limousin threw himself into an easy-chair and crossed his legs. "I am not setting him up as a martyr in the least, but I think that, situated as we are, it is ridiculous to defy this man as you do, from morning till night."

She took a cigarette from the mantelpiece, lighted it, and replied: "But I do not defy him; quite the contrary. Only he irritates me by his stupidity, and I treat him as he deserves."

Limousin continued impatiently: "What you are doing is very foolish! I am only asking you to treat your husband gently, because we both of us require him to trust us. I think that you ought to see that."

They were close together: he, tall, dark, with long whiskers and the rather vulgar manners of a good-looking man who is very well satisfied with himself;

she, small, fair, and pink, a little Parisian, born in the back room of a shop, half cocotte and half bourgeoisie, brought up to entice customers to the store by her glances, and married, in consequence, to a simple, unsophisticated man, who saw her outside the door every morning when he went out and every evening when he came home.

"But do you not understand, you great booby," she said, "that I hate him just because he married me, because he bought me, in fact; because everything that he says and does, everything that he thinks, acts on my nerves? He exasperates me every moment by his stupidity, which you call his kindness; by his dullness, which you call his confidence, and then, above all, because he is my husband, instead of you. I feel him between us, although he does not interfere with us much. And then—and then! No, it is, after all, too idiotic of him not to guess anything! I wish he would, at any rate, be a little jealous. There are moments when I feel inclined to say to him: 'Do you not see, you stupid creature, that Paul is my lover?'"

"It is quite incomprehensible that you cannot understand how hateful he is to me, how he irritates me. You always seem to like him, and you shake hands with him cordially. Men are very extraordinary at times."

"One must know how to dissimulate, my dear."

"It is no question of dissimulation, but of feeling. One might think that, when you men deceive one another, you like each other better on that account, while we women hate a man from the moment that we have betrayed him."

"I do not see why one should hate an excellent fellow because one is friendly with his wife."

"You do not see it? You do not see it? You all

of you are wanting in refinement of feeling. However, that is one of those things which one feels and cannot express. And then, moreover, one ought not. No, you would not understand; it is quite useless! You men have no delicacy of feeling."

And smiling, with the gentle contempt of an impure woman, she put both her hands on his shoulders and held up her lips to him. He stooped down and clasped her closely in his arms, and their lips met. And as they stood in front of the mantel mirror, another couple exactly like them embraced behind the clock.

They had heard nothing, neither the noise of the key nor the creaking of the door, but suddenly Henriette, with a loud cry, pushed Limousin away with both her arms, and they saw Parent looking at them, livid with rage, without his shoes on and his hat over his forehead. He looked at each, one after the other, with a quick glance of his eyes and without moving his head. He appeared beside himself. Then, without saying a word, he threw himself on Limousin, seized him as if he were going to strangle him, and flung him into the opposite corner of the room so violently that the other lost his balance, and, beating the air with his hand, struck his head violently against the wall.

When Henriette saw that her husband was going to murder her lover, she threw herself on Parent, seized him by the neck, and digging her ten delicate, rosy fingers into his neck, she squeezed him so tightly, with all the vigor of a desperate woman, that the blood spurted out under her nails, and she bit his shoulder, as if she wished to tear it with her teeth. Parent, half-strangled and choking, loosened his hold on Limousin, in order to shake off his wife, who was hanging to his neck. Put-

ting his arms round her waist, he flung her also to the other end of the drawing-room.

Then, as his passion was short-lived, like that of most good-tempered men, and his strength was soon exhausted, he remained standing between the two, panting, worn out, not knowing what to do next. His brutal fury had expended itself in that effort, like the froth of a bottle of champagne, and his unwonted energy ended in a gasping for breath. As soon as he could speak, however, he said:

“Go away—both of you—immediately! Go away!”

Limousin remained motionless in his corner, against the wall, too startled to understand anything as yet, too frightened to move a finger; while Henriette, with her hands resting on a small, round table, her head bent forward, her hair hanging down, the bodice of her dress unfastened, waited like a wild animal which is about to spring. Parent continued in a stronger voice: “Go away immediately. Get out of the house!”

His wife, however, seeing that he had got over his first exasperation, grew bolder, drew herself up, took two steps toward him, and, grown almost insolent, she said: “Have you lost your head? What is the matter with you? What is the meaning of this unjustifiable violence?”

But he turned toward her, and raising his fist to strike her, he stammered out: “Oh—oh—this is too much, too much! I heard everything! Everything—do you understand? Everything! You wretch—you wretch! You are two wretches! Get out of the house, both of you! Immediately, or I shall kill you! Leave the house!”

She saw that it was all over, and that he knew everything; that she could not prove her innocence, and

that she must comply. But all her impudence had returned to her, and her hatred for the man, which was aggravated now, drove her to audacity, made her feel the need of bravado, and of defying him, and she said in a clear voice: "Come, Limousin; as he is going to turn me out of doors, I will go to your lodgings with you."

But Limousin did not move, and Parent, in a fresh access of rage, cried out: "Go, will you? Go, you wretches! Or else—or else——" He seized a chair and whirled it over his head.

Henriette walked quickly across the room, took her lover by the arm, dragged him from the wall, to which he appeared fixed, and led him toward the door, saying: "Do come, my friend—you see that the man is mad. Do come!"

As she went out she turned round to her husband, trying to think of something that she could do, something that she could invent to wound him to the heart as she left the house, and an idea struck her, one of those venomous, deadly ideas in which all a woman's perfidy shows itself, and she said resolutely: "I am going to take my child with me."

Parent was stupefied, and stammered: "Your—your—child? You dare to talk of your child? You venture—you venture to ask for your child—after—after—— Oh, oh, that is too much! Go, you vile creature! Go!"

She went up to him again, almost smiling, almost avenged already, and defying him, standing close to him, and face to face, she said: "I want my child, and you have no right to keep him, because he is not yours—do you understand? He is not yours! He is Limousin's!"

And Parent cried out in bewilderment: "You lie—you lie—worthless woman!"

But she continued: "You fool! Everybody knows it except you. I tell you, this is his father. You need only look at him to see it."

Parent staggered backward, and then he suddenly turned round, took a candle, and rushed into the next room; returning almost immediately, carrying little George wrapped up in his bedclothes. The child, who had been suddenly awakened, was crying from fright. Parent threw him into his wife's arms, and then, without speaking, he pushed her roughly out toward the stairs, where Limousin was waiting, from motives of prudence.

Then he shut the door again, double-locked and bolted it, but had scarcely got back into the drawing-room when he fell to the floor at full length.

II

PARENT lived alone, quite alone. During the five weeks that followed their separation, the feeling of surprise at his new life prevented him from thinking much. He had resumed his bachelor life, his habits of lounging about, and took his meals at a restaurant, as he had done formerly. As he wished to avoid any scandal, he made his wife an allowance, which was arranged by their lawyers. By degrees, however, the thought of the child began to haunt him. Often, when he was at home alone at night, he suddenly thought he heard George calling out "Papa," and his heart would begin to beat, and he would get up quickly and open the door, to see whether, by chance, the child might have returned, as dogs or pigeons do. Why should a child have less instinct than an animal? On finding that he was mis-

taken, he would sit down in his armchair again and think of the boy. He would think of him for hours and whole days. It was not only a moral, but still more a physical obsession, a nervous longing to kiss him, to hold and fondle him, to take him on his knees and dance him. He felt the child's little arms around his neck, his little mouth pressing a kiss on his beard, his soft hair tickling his cheeks, and the remembrance of all those childish ways made him suffer as a man might for some beloved woman who has left him. Twenty or a hundred times a day he asked himself the question whether he was or was not George's father, and almost before he was in bed every night he recommenced the same series of despairing questionings.

He especially dreaded the darkness of the evening, the melancholy feeling of the twilight. Then a flood of sorrow invaded his heart, a torrent of despair which seemed to overwhelm him and drive him mad. He was as afraid of his own thoughts as men are of criminals, and he fled before them as one does from wild beasts. Above all things, he feared his empty, dark, horrible dwelling and the deserted streets, in which, here and there, a gas lamp flickered, where the isolated foot passenger whom one hears in the distance seems to be a night prowler, and makes one walk faster or slower, according to whether he is coming toward you or following you.

And in spite of himself, and by instinct, Parent went in the direction of the broad, well-lighted, populous streets. The light and the crowd attracted him, occupied his mind and distracted his thoughts, and when he was tired of walking aimlessly about among the moving crowd, when he saw the foot passengers becoming more scarce and the pavements less crowded, the fear

of solitude and silence drove him into some large café full of drinkers and of light. He went there as flies go to a candle, and he would sit down at one of the little round tables and ask for a "bock," which he would drink slowly, feeling uneasy every time a customer got up to go. He would have liked to take him by the arm, hold him back, and beg him to stay a little longer, so much did he dread the time when the waiter should come up to him and say sharply: "Come, monsieur, it is closing time!"

He thus got into the habit of going to the beer houses, where the continual elbowing of the drinkers brings you in contact with a familiar and silent public, where the heavy clouds of tobacco smoke lull disquietude, while the heavy beer dulls the mind and calms the heart. He almost lived there. He was scarcely up before he went there to find people to distract his glances and his thoughts, and soon, as he felt too lazy to move, he took his meals there.

After every meal, during more than an hour, he sipped three or four small glasses of brandy, which stupefied him by degrees, and then his head drooped on his chest, he shut his eyes, and went to sleep. Then, awaking, he raised himself on the red velvet seat, straightened his waistcoat, pulled down his cuffs, and took up the newspapers again, though he had already seen them in the morning, and read them all through again, from beginning to end. Between four and five o'clock he went for a walk on the boulevards, to get a little fresh air, as he used to say, and then came back to the seat which had been reserved for him, and asked for his absinthe. He would talk to the regular customers whose acquaintance he had made. They discussed the news of the day and political events, and that carried him

on till dinner time; and he spent the evening as he had the afternoon, until it was time to close. That was a terrible moment for him when he was obliged to go out into the dark, into his empty room full of dreadful recollections, of horrible thoughts, and of mental agony. He no longer saw any of his old friends, none of his relatives, nobody who might remind him of his past life. But as his apartments were a hell to him, he took a room in a large hotel, a good room on the ground floor, so as to see the passers-by. He was no longer alone in that great building. He felt people swarming round him, he heard voices in the adjoining rooms, and when his former sufferings tormented him too much at the sight of his bed, which was turned down, and of his solitary fireplace, he went out into the wide passages and walked up and down them like a sentinel, before all the closed doors, and looked sadly at the shoes standing in couples outside them, women's little boots by the side of men's thick ones, and he thought that, no doubt, all these people were happy, and were sleeping in their warm beds.

Five years passed thus; five miserable years. But one day, when he was taking his usual walk between the Madeleine and the Rue Drouot, he suddenly saw a lady whose bearing struck him. A tall gentleman and a child were with her, and all three were walking in front of him. He asked himself where he had seen them before, when suddenly he recognized a movement of her hand; it was his wife, his wife with Limousin and his child, his little George.

His heart beat as if it would suffocate him, but he did not stop, for he wished to see them, and he followed them. They looked like a family of the better middle class. Henriette was leaning on Paul's arm,

and speaking to him in a low voice, and looking at him sideways occasionally. Parent got a side view of her and recognized her pretty features, the movements of her lips, her smile, and her coaxing glances. But the child chiefly took up his attention. How tall and strong he was! Parent could not see his face, but only his long, fair curls. That tall boy with bare legs, who was walking by his mother's side like a little man, was George.

He saw them suddenly, all three, as they stopped in front of a shop. Limousin had grown very gray, had aged and was thinner; his wife, on the contrary, was as young looking as ever, and had grown stouter. George he would not have recognized, he was so different from what he had been formerly.

They went on again, and Parent followed them. He walked on quickly, passed them, and then turned round, so as to meet them face to face. As he passed the child he felt a mad longing to take him into his arms and run off with him, and he knocked against him as if by accident. The boy turned round and looked at the clumsy man angrily, and Parent hurried away, shocked, hurt, and pursued by that look. He went off like a thief, seized with a horrible fear lest he should have been seen and recognized by his wife and her lover. He went to his café without stopping, and fell breathless into his chair. That evening he drank three absinthes.

For four months he felt the pain of that meeting in his heart. Every night he saw the three again, happy and tranquil, father, mother, and child walking on the boulevard before going in to dinner, and that new vision effaced the old one. It was another matter, another hallucination now, and also a fresh pain. Little George,

his little George, the child he had so much loved and so often kissed, disappeared in the far distance, and he saw a new one, like a brother of the first, a little boy with bare legs, who did not know him! He suffered terribly at that thought. The child's love was dead; there was no bond between them; the child would not have held out his arms when he saw him. He had even looked at him angrily.

Then, by degrees he grew calmer, his mental torture diminished, the image that had appeared to his eyes and which haunted his nights became more indistinct and less frequent. He began once more to live nearly like everybody else, like all those idle people who drink beer off marble-topped tables and wear out their clothes on the threadbare velvet of the couches.

He grew old amid the smoke from pipes, lost his hair under the gas lights, looked upon his weekly bath, on his fortnightly visit to the barber's to have his hair cut, and on the purchase of a new coat or hat as an event. When he got to his café in a new hat he would look at himself in the glass for a long time before sitting down, and take it off and put it on again several times, and at last ask his friend, the lady at the bar, who was watching him with interest, whether she thought it suited him.

Two or three times a year he went to the theatre, and in the summer he sometimes spent his evenings at one of the open-air concerts in the Champs-Élysées. And so the years followed each other, slow, monotonous, and short, because they were quite uneventful.

He very rarely now thought of the dreadful drama which had wrecked his life; for twenty years had passed since that terrible evening. But the life he had led since then had worn him out. The landlord of his café

would often say to him: "You ought to pull yourself together a little, Monsieur Parent; you should get some fresh air and go into the country. I assure you that you have changed very much within the last few months." And when his customer had gone out he used to say to the barmaid: "That poor Monsieur Parent is booked for another world; it is bad never to get out of Paris. Advise him to go out of town for a day occasionally; he has confidence in you. Summer will soon be here; that will put him straight."

And she, full of pity and kindness for such a regular customer, said to Parent every day: "Come, monsieur, make up your mind to get a little fresh air. It is so charming in the country when the weather is fine. Oh, if I could, I would spend my life there!"

By degrees he was seized with a vague desire to go just once and see whether it was really as pleasant there as she said, outside the walls of the great city. One morning he said to her:

"Do you know where one can get a good luncheon in the neighborhood of Paris?"

"Go to the Terrace at Saint-Germain; it is delightful there!"

He had been there formerly, just when he became engaged. He made up his mind to go there again, and he chose a Sunday, for no special reason, but merely because people generally do go out on Sundays, even when they have nothing to do all the week; and so one Sunday morning he went to Saint-Germain. He felt low-spirited and vexed at having yielded to that new longing, and at having broken through his usual habits. He was thirsty; he would have liked to get out at every station and sit down in the café which he saw outside and drink a "bock" or two, and then take the first

train back to Paris. The journey seemed very long to him. He could remain sitting for whole days, as long as he had the same motionless objects before his eyes, but he found it very trying and fatiguing to remain sitting while he was being whirled along, and to see the whole country fly by, while he himself was motionless.

However, he found the Seine interesting every time he crossed it. Under the bridge at Chatou he saw some small boats going at great speed under the vigorous strokes of the bare-armed oarsmen, and he thought: "There are some fellows who are certainly enjoying themselves!" The train entered the tunnel just before you get to the station at Saint-Germain, and presently stopped at the platform. Parent got out, and walked slowly, for he already felt tired, toward the Terrace, with his hands behind his back, and when he got to the iron balustrade, stopped to look at the distant horizon. The immense plain spread out before him vast as the sea, green and studded with large villages, almost as populous as towns. The sun bathed the whole landscape in its full, warm light. The Seine wound like an endless serpent through the plain, flowed round the villages and along the slopes. Parent inhaled the warm breeze, which seemed to make his heart young again, to enliven his spirits, and to vivify his blood, and said to himself:

"Why, it is delightful here."

Then he went on a few steps, and stopped again to look about him. The utter misery of his existence seemed to be brought into full relief by the intense light which inundated the landscape. He saw his twenty years of café life—dull, monotonous, heart-breaking. He might have traveled as others did, have gone among

foreigners, to unknown countries beyond the sea, have interested himself somewhat in everything which other men are passionately devoted to, in arts and science; he might have enjoyed life in a thousand forms, that mysterious life which is either charming or painful, constantly changing, always inexplicable and strange. Now, however, it was too late. He would go on drinking "bock" after "bock" until he died, without any family, without friends, without hope, without any curiosity about anything, and he was seized with a feeling of misery and a wish to run away, to hide himself in Paris, in his café and his lethargy! All the thoughts, all the dreams, all the desires which are dormant in the slough of stagnating hearts had reawakened, brought to life by those rays of sunlight on the plain.

Parent felt that if he were to remain there any longer he should lose his reason, and he made haste to get to the Pavillon Henri IV for lunch, to try and forget his troubles under the influence of wine and alcohol, and at any rate to have some one to speak to.

He took a small table in one of the arbors, from which one can see all the surrounding country, ordered his lunch, and asked to be served at once. Then some more people arrived and sat down at tables near him. He felt more comfortable; he was no longer alone. Three persons were eating luncheon near him. He looked at them two or three times without seeing them clearly, as one looks at total strangers. Suddenly a woman's voice sent a shiver through him which seemed to penetrate to his very marrow.

"George," it said, "will you carve the chicken?"

And another voice replied: "Yes, mamma."

Parent looked up, and he understood; he guessed immediately who those people were! He should certainly

not have known them again. His wife had grown quite white and very stout, an elderly, serious, respectable lady, and she held her head forward as she ate for fear of spotting her dress, although she had a table napkin tucked under her chin. George had become a man. He had a slight beard, that uneven and almost colorless beard which adorns the cheeks of youths. He wore a high hat, a white waistcoat, and a monocle, because it looked swell, no doubt. Parent looked at him in astonishment. Was that George, his son? No, he did not know that young man; there could be nothing in common between them. Limousin had his back to him, and was eating, with his shoulders rather bent.

All three of them seemed happy and satisfied; they came and took luncheon in the country at well-known restaurants. They had had a calm and pleasant existence, a family existence in a warm and comfortable house, filled with all those trifles which make life agreeable, with affection, with all those tender words which people exchange continually when they love each other. They had lived thus, thanks to him, Parent, on his money, after having deceived him, robbed him, ruined him! They had condemned him, the innocent, simple-minded, jovial man, to all the miseries of solitude, to that abominable life which he had led between the pavement and a bar-room, to every mental torture and every physical misery! They had made him a useless, aimless being, a waif in the world, a poor old man without any pleasures, any prospects, expecting nothing from anybody or anything. For him, the world was empty, because he loved nothing in the world. He might go among other nations, or go about the streets, go into all the houses in Paris, open every room, but he would not find inside any door the beloved face,

the face of wife or child which smiles when it sees you. This idea worked upon him more than any other, the idea of a door which one opens, to see and to embrace somebody behind it.

And that was the fault of those three wretches! The fault of that worthless woman, of that infamous friend, and of that tall, light-haired lad who put on insolent airs. Now he felt as angry with the child as he did with the other two. Was he not Limousin's son? Would Limousin have kept him and loved him otherwise? Would not Limousin very quickly have got rid of the mother and of the child if he had not felt sure that it was his, positively his? Does anybody bring up other people's children? And now they were there, quite close to him, those three who had made him suffer so much.

Parent looked at them, irritated and excited at the recollection of all his sufferings and of his despair, and was especially exasperated at their placid and satisfied looks. He felt inclined to kill them, to throw his siphon of Seltzer water at them, to split open Limousin's head as he every moment bent it over his plate, raising it again immediately.

He would have his revenge now, on the spot, as he had them under his hand. But how? He tried to think of some means, he pictured such dreadful things as one reads of in the newspapers occasionally, but could not hit on anything practical. And he went on drinking to excite himself, to give himself courage not to allow such an opportunity to escape him, as he might never have another.

Suddenly an idea struck him, a terrible idea; and he left off drinking to mature it. He smiled as he murmured: "I have them, I have them! We will see; we will see!"

They finished their luncheon slowly, conversing with perfect unconcern. Parent could not hear what they were saying, but he saw their quiet gestures. His wife's face especially exasperated him. She had assumed a haughty air, the air of a comfortable, devout woman, of an unapproachable, devout woman, sheathed in principles, iron-clad in virtue. They paid their bill and got up from table. Parent then noticed Limousin. He might have been taken for a retired diplomat, for he looked a man of great importance, with his soft white whiskers, the tips of which touched his coat collar.

They walked away. Parent rose and followed them. First they went up and down the terrace, and calmly admired the landscape, and then they went into the forest. Parent followed them at a distance, hiding himself so as not to excite their suspicion too soon.

Parent came up to them by degrees, breathing hard with emotion and fatigue, for he was unused to walking now. He soon came up to them, but was seized with fear, an inexplicable fear, and he passed them, so as to turn round and meet them face to face. He walked on, his heart beating, feeling that they were just behind him now, and he said to himself: "Come, now is the time. Courage! courage! Now is the moment!"

He turned round. They were all three sitting on the grass, at the foot of a huge tree, and were still chatting. He made up his mind, and walked back rapidly; stopping in front of them in the middle of the road, he said abruptly, in a voice broken by emotion:

"It is I! Here I am! I suppose you did not expect me?"

They all three stared at this man, who seemed to be insane. He continued:

"One would suppose that you did not know me again. Just look at me! I am Parent, Henri Parent. You thought it was all over, and that you would never see me again. Ah! but here I am once more, you see, and now we will have an explanation."

Henriette, terrified, hid her face in her hands, murmuring: "Oh! Good heavens!"

Seeing this stranger, who seemed to be threatening his mother, George sprang up, ready to seize him by the collar. Limousin, thunderstruck, looked in horror at this apparition, who, after gasping for breath, continued:

"So now we will have an explanation; the proper moment has come! Ah! you deceived me, you condemned me to the life of a convict, and you thought that I should never catch you!"

The young man took him by the shoulders and pushed him back.

"Are you mad?" he asked. "What do you want? Go on your way immediately, or I shall give you a thrashing!"

"What do I want?" replied Parent. "I want to tell you who these people are."

George, however, was in a rage, and shook him, and was even going to strike him.

"Let me go," said Parent. "I am your father. There, see whether they recognize me now, the wretches!"

The young man, thunderstruck, unclenched his fists and turned toward his mother. Parent, as soon as he was released, approached her.

"Well," he said, "tell him yourself who I am! Tell him that my name is Henri Parent, that I am his father because his name is George Parent, because you are my wife, because you are all three living on my money, on the allowance of ten thousand francs which

I have made you since I drove you out of my house. Will you tell him also why I drove you out? Because I surprised you with this beggar, this wretch, your lover! Tell him what I was, an honorable man, whom you married for money, and whom you deceived from the very first day. Tell him who you are, and who I am——”

He stammered and gasped for breath in his rage. The woman exclaimed in a heartrending voice:

“Paul, Paul, stop him; make him be quiet! Do not let him say this before my son!”

Limousin had also risen to his feet. He said in a very low voice:

“Hold your tongue! Hold your tongue! Do you understand what you are doing?”

“I quite know what I am doing,” resumed Parent, “and that is not all. There is one thing that I will know, something that has tormented me for twenty years.” Then, turning to George, who was leaning against a tree in consternation, he said:

“Listen to me. When she left my house she thought it was not enough to have deceived me, but she also wanted to drive me to despair. You were my only consolation, and she took you with her, swearing that I was not your father, but that he was your father. Was she lying? I do not know. I have been asking myself the question for the last twenty years.”

He went close up to her, tragic and terrible, and, pulling away her hands, with which she had covered her face, he continued:

“Well, now! I call upon you to tell me which of us two is the father of this young man; he or I, your husband or your lover. Come! Come! tell us.”

Limousin rushed at him. Parent pushed him back,

and, sneering in his fury, he said: "Ah! you are brave now! You are braver than you were that day when you ran downstairs because you thought I was going to murder you. Very well! If she will not reply, tell me yourself. You ought to know as well as she. Tell me, are you this young fellow's father? Come! Come! Tell me!"

He turned to his wife again.

"If you will not tell me, at any rate tell your son. He is a man, now, and he has the right to know who his father is. I do not know, and I never did know, never, never! I cannot tell you, my boy."

He seemed to be losing his senses; his voice grew shrill and he worked his arms about as if he had an epileptic fit.

"Come! . . . Give me an answer. . . . She does not know. . . . I will make a bet that she does not know. . . . No . . . she does not know, by Jove! . . . Ha! ha! ha! . . . Nobody knows . . . nobody. . . . How can one know such things? . . . You will not know either, my boy, you will not know any more than I do . . . never. . . . Look here. . . . Ask her . . . you will find that she does not know. . . . I do not know either . . . nor does he, nor do you, nobody knows. You can choose. . . . You can choose . . . yes, you can choose . . . him or me. . . . Choose. . . . Good evening. . . . It is all over. . . . If she makes up her mind to tell you, you will come and let me know, will you not? I am living at the Hôtel des Continents. . . . I should be glad to know. . . . Good evening. . . . I hope you will enjoy yourselves very much. . . ."

And he went away gesticulating, talking to himself under the tall trees, in the quiet, the cool air, which was full of the fragrance of growing plants. He did not turn

round to look at them, but went straight on, walking under the stimulus of his rage, under a storm of passion, with that one fixed idea in his mind. All at once he found himself outside the station. A train was about to start and he got in. During the journey his anger calmed down, he regained his senses and returned to Paris, astonished at his own boldness, full of aches and pains as if he had broken some bones. Nevertheless, he went to have a "bock" at his brewery.

When she saw him come in, Mademoiselle Zoé asked in surprise: "What! back already? are you tired?"

"Yes—yes, I am tired . . . very tired. . . . You know, when one is not used to going out. . . . I've had enough of it. I shall not go into the country again. It would have been better to have stayed here. For the future, I shall not stir out."

She could not persuade him to tell her about his little excursion, much as she wished to.

For the first time in his life he got thoroughly drunk that night, and had to be carried home.

USELESS BEAUTY

I

ABOUT half-past five one afternoon at the end of June when the sun was shining warm and bright into the large courtyard, a very elegant victoria with two beautiful black horses drew up in front of the mansion.

The Comtesse de Mascaret came down the steps just as her husband, who was coming home, appeared in the carriage entrance. He stopped for a few moments to look at his wife and turned rather pale. The countess was very beautiful, graceful and distinguished looking, with her long oval face, her complexion like yellow ivory, her large gray eyes and her black hair; and she got into her carriage without looking at him, without even seeming to have noticed him, with such a particularly high-bred air, that the furious jealousy by which he had been devoured for so long again gnawed at his heart. He went up to her and said: "You are going for a drive?"

She merely replied disdainfully: "You see I am!"

"In the Bois de Boulogne?"

"Most probably."

"May I come with you?"

"The carriage belongs to you."

Without being surprised at the tone in which she answered him, he got in and sat down by his wife's

side and said: "Bois de Boulogne." The footman jumped up beside the coachman, and the horses as usual pranced and tossed their heads until they were in the street. Husband and wife sat side by side without speaking. He was thinking how to begin a conversation, but she maintained such an obstinately hard look that he did not venture to make the attempt. At last, however, he cunningly, accidentally as it were, touched the countess' gloved hand with his own, but she drew her arm away with a movement which was so expressive of disgust that he remained thoughtful, in spite of his usual authoritative and despotic character, and he said: "Gabrielle!"

"What do you want?"

"I think you are looking adorable."

She did not reply, but remained lying back in the carriage, looking like an irritated queen. By that time they were driving up the Champs Elysées, toward the Arc de Triomphe. That immense monument, at the end of the long avenue, raised its colossal arch against the red sky and the sun seemed to be descending on it, showering fiery dust on it from the sky.

The stream of carriages, with dashes of sunlight reflected in the silver trappings of the harness and the glass of the lamps, flowed on in a double current toward the town and toward the Bois, and the Comte de Mascaret continued: "My dear Gabrielle!"

Unable to control herself any longer, she replied in an exasperated voice: "Oh! do leave me in peace, pray! I am not even allowed to have my carriage to myself now." He pretended not to hear her and continued: "You never have looked so pretty as you do to-day."

Her patience had come to an end, and she replied with irrepressible anger: "You are wrong to notice it,

for I swear to you that I will never have anything to do with you in that way again."

The count was decidedly stupefied and upset, and, his violent nature gaining the upper hand, he exclaimed: "What do you mean by that?" in a tone that betrayed rather the brutal master than the lover. She replied in a low voice, so that the servants might not hear amid the deafening noise of the wheels: "Ah! What do I mean by that? What do I mean by that? Now I recognize you again! Do you want me to tell everything?"

"Yes."

"Everything that has weighed on my heart since I have been the victim of your terrible selfishness?"

He had grown red with surprise and anger and he growled between his closed teeth: "Yes, tell me everything."

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a big red beard, a handsome man, a nobleman, a man of the world, who passed as a perfect husband and an excellent father, and now, for the first time since they had started, she turned toward him and looked him full in the face: "Ah! You will hear some disagreeable things, but you must know that I am prepared for everything, that I fear nothing, and you less than any one to-day."

He also was looking into her eyes and was already shaking with rage as he said in a low voice: "You are mad."

"No, but I will no longer be the victim of the hateful penalty of maternity, which you have inflicted on me for eleven years! I wish to take my place in society as I have the right to do, as all women have the right to do."

He suddenly grew pale again and stammered: "I do not understand you."

"Oh! yes; you understand me well enough. It is now three months since I had my last child, and as I am still very beautiful, and as, in spite of all your efforts, you cannot spoil my figure, as you just now perceived, when you saw me on the doorstep, you think it is time that I should think of having another child."

"But you are talking nonsense!"

"No, I am not, I am thirty, and I have had seven children, and we have been married eleven years, and you hope that this will go on for ten years longer, after which you will leave off being jealous."

He seized her arm and squeezed it, saying: "I will not allow you to talk to me like that much longer."

"And I shall talk to you till the end, until I have finished all I have to say to you, and if you try to prevent me, I shall raise my voice so that the two servants, who are on the box, may hear. I only allowed you to come with me for that object, for I have these witnesses who will oblige you to listen to me and to contain yourself, so now pay attention to what I say. I have always felt an antipathy to you, and I have always let you see it, for I have never lied, monsieur. You married me in spite of myself; you forced my parents, who were in embarrassed circumstances, to give me to you, because you were rich, and they obliged me to marry you in spite of my tears.

"So you bought me, and as soon as I was in your power, as soon as I had become your companion, ready to attach myself to you, to forget your coercive and threatening proceedings, in order that I might only remember that I ought to be a devoted wife and to love you as much as it might be possible for me to love you, you became jealous, you, as no man has ever been before, with the base, ignoble jealousy of a spy, which,

was as degrading to you as it was to me. I had not been married eight months when you suspected me of every perfidiousness, and you even told me so. What a disgrace! And as you could not prevent me from being beautiful and from pleasing people, from being called in drawing-rooms and also in the newspapers one of the most beautiful women in Paris, you tried everything you could think of to keep admirers from me, and you hit upon the abominable idea of making me spend my life in a constant state of motherhood, until the time should come when I should disgust every man. Oh, do not deny it. I did not understand it for some time, but then I guessed it. You even boasted about it to your sister, who told me of it, for she is fond of me and was disgusted at your boorish coarseness.

"Ah! Remember how you have behaved in the past! How for eleven years you have compelled me to give up all society and simply be a mother to your children. And then you would grow disgusted with me and I was sent into the country, the family château, among fields and meadows. And when I reappeared, fresh, pretty and unspoiled, still seductive and constantly surrounded by admirers, hoping that at last I should live a little more like a rich young society woman, you were seized with jealousy again, and you began once more to persecute me with that infamous and hateful desire from which you are suffering at this moment by my side. And it is not the desire of possessing me—for I should never have refused myself to you, but it is the wish to make me unsightly.

"And then that abominable and mysterious thing occurred which I was a long time in understanding (but I grew sharp by dint of watching your thoughts and actions): You attached yourself to your children with

all the security which they gave you while I bore them. You felt affection for them, with all your aversion to me, and in spite of your ignoble fears, which were momentarily allayed by your pleasure in seeing me lose my symmetry.

"Oh! how often have I noticed that joy in you! I have seen it in your eyes and guessed it. You loved your children as victories, and not because they were of your own blood. They were victories over me, over my youth, over my beauty, over my charms, over the compliments which were paid me and over those that were whispered around me without being paid to me personally. And you are proud of them, you make a parade of them, you take them out for drives in your break in the Bois de Boulogne and you give them donkey rides at Montmorency. You take them to theatrical matinées so that you may be seen in the midst of them, so that the people may say: 'What a kind father' and that it may be repeated——"

He had seized her wrist with savage brutality, and he squeezed it so violently that she was quiet and nearly cried out with the pain and he said to her in a whisper:

"I love my children, do you hear? What you have just told me is disgraceful in a mother. But you belong to me; I am master—your master—I can exact from you what I like and when I like—and I have the law—on my side."

He was trying to crush her fingers in the strong grip of his large, muscular hand, and she, livid with pain, tried in vain to free them from that vise which was crushing them. The agony made her breathe hard and the tears came into her eyes. "You see that I am the master and the stronger," he said. When he somewhat

loosened his grip, she asked him: "Do you think that I am a religious woman?"

He was surprised and stammered "Yes."

"Do you think that I could lie if I swore to the truth of anything to you before an altar on which Christ's body is?"

"No."

"Will you go with me to some church?"

"What for?"

"You shall see. Will you?"

"If you absolutely wish it, yes."

She raised her voice and said: "Philippe!" And the coachman, bending down a little, without taking his eyes from his horses, seemed to turn his ear alone toward his mistress, who continued: "Drive to St. Philippe-du-Roule." And the victoria, which had reached the entrance of the Bois de Boulogne, returned to Paris.

Husband and wife did not exchange a word further during the drive, and when the carriage stopped before the church Madame de Mascaret jumped out and entered it, followed by the count, a few yards distant. She went, without stopping, as far as the choir-screen, and falling on her knees at a chair, she buried her face in her hands. She prayed for a long time, and he, standing behind her, could see that she was crying. She wept noiselessly, as women weep when they are in great, poignant grief. There was a kind of undulation in her body, which ended in a little sob, which was hidden and stifled by her fingers.

But the Comte de Mascaret thought that the situation was lasting too long, and he touched her on the shoulder. That contact recalled her to herself, as if she had been burned, and getting up, she looked straight into his eyes. "This is what I have to say to you. I

am afraid of nothing, whatever you may do to me. You may kill me if you like. One of your children is not yours, and one only; that I swear to you before God, who hears me here. That was the only revenge that was possible for me in return for all your abominable masculine tyrannies, in return for the penal servitude of childbearing to which you have condemned me. Who was my lover? That you never will know! You may suspect every one, but you never will find out. I gave myself to him, without love and without pleasure, only for the sake of betraying you, and he also made me a mother. Which is the child? That also you never will know. I have seven; try to find out! I intended to tell you this later, for one has not avenged oneself on a man by deceiving him, unless he knows it. You have driven me to confess it to-day. I have now finished."

She hurried through the church toward the open door, expecting to hear behind her the quick steps of her husband whom she had defied and to be knocked to the ground by a blow of his fist, but she heard nothing and reached her carriage. She jumped into it at a bound, overwhelmed with anguish and breathless with fear. So she called out to the coachman: "Home!" and the horses set off at a quick trot.

II

The Comtesse de Mascaret was waiting in her room for dinner time as a criminal sentenced to death awaits the hour of his execution. What was her husband going to do? Had he come home? Despotie, passionate, ready for any violence as he was, what was he meditating, what had he made up his mind to do? There was no sound

in the house, and every moment she looked at the clock. Her lady's maid had come and dressed her for the evening and had then left the room again. Eight o'clock struck and almost at the same moment there were two knocks at the door, and the butler came in and announced dinner.

"Has the count come in?"

"Yes, Madame la Comtesse. He is in the dining-room."

For a little moment she felt inclined to arm herself with a small revolver which she had bought some time before, foreseeing the tragedy which was being rehearsed in her heart. But she remembered that all the children would be there, and she took nothing except a bottle of smelling salts. He rose somewhat ceremoniously from his chair. They exchanged a slight bow and sat down. The three boys with their tutor, Abbé Martin, were on her right and the three girls, with Miss Smith, their English governess, were on her left. The youngest child, who was only three months old, remained upstairs with his nurse.

The abbé said grace as usual when there was no company, for the children did not come down to dinner when guests were present. Then they began dinner. The countess, suffering from emotion, which she had not calculated upon, remained with her eyes cast down, while the count scrutinized now the three boys and now the three girls with an uncertain, unhappy expression, which travelled from one to the other. Suddenly pushing his wineglass from him, it broke, and the wine was spilt on the tablecloth, and at the slight noise caused by this little accident the countess started up from her chair, and for the first time they looked at each other. Then, in spite of themselves, in spite of the irritation

of their nerves caused by every glance, they continued to exchange looks, rapid as pistol shots.

The abbé, who felt that there was some cause for embarrassment which he could not divine, attempted to begin a conversation and tried various subjects, but his useless efforts gave rise to no ideas and did not bring out a word. The countess, with feminine tact and obeying her instincts of a woman of the world, attempted to answer him two or three times, but in vain. She could not find words, in the perplexity of her mind, and her own voice almost frightened her in the silence of the large room, where nothing was heard except the slight sound of plates and knives and forks.

Suddenly her husband said to her, bending forward: "Here, amid your children, will you swear to me that what you told me just now is true?"

The hatred which was fermenting in her veins suddenly roused her, and replying to that question with the same firmness with which she had replied to his looks, she raised both her hands, the right pointing toward the boys and the left toward the girls, and said in a firm, resolute voice and without any hesitation: "On the head of my children, I swear that I have told you the truth."

He got up and throwing his table napkin on the table with a movement of exasperation, he turned round and flung his chair against the wall, and then went out without another word, while she, uttering a deep sigh, as if after a first victory, went on in a calm voice: "You must not pay any attention to what your father has just said, my darlings; he was very much upset a short time ago, but he will be all right again in a few days."

Then she talked with the abbé and Miss Smith and

had tender, pretty words for all her children, those sweet, tender mother's ways which unfold little hearts.

When dinner was over she went into the drawing-room, all her children following her. She made the elder ones chatter, and when their bedtime came she kissed them for a long time and then went alone into her room.

She waited, for she had no doubt that the count would come, and she made up her mind then, as her children were not with her, to protect herself as a woman of the world as she would protect her life, and in the pocket of her dress she put the little loaded revolver which she had bought a few days previously. The hours went by, the hours struck, and every sound was hushed in the house. Only the cabs continued to rumble through the streets, but their noise was only heard vaguely through the shuttered and curtained windows.

She waited, full of nervous energy, without any fear of him now, ready for anything, and almost triumphant, for she had found means of torturing him continually during every moment of his life.

But the first gleam of dawn came in through the fringe at the bottom of her curtain without his having come into her room, and then she awoke to the fact, with much amazement, that he was not coming. Having locked and bolted her door, for greater security, she went to bed at last and remained there, with her eyes open, thinking and barely understanding it all, without being able to guess what he was going to do.

When her maid brought her tea she at the same time handed her a letter from her husband. He told her that he was going to undertake a longish journey and in a postscript added that his lawyer would provide

her with any sums of money she might require for all her expenses.

III

It was at the opera, between two acts of "Robert the Devil." In the stalls the men were standing up, with their hats on, their waistcoats cut very low so as to show a large amount of white shirt front, in which gold and jewelled studs glistened, and were looking at the boxes full of ladies in low dresses covered with diamonds and pearls, who were expanding like flowers in that illuminated hothouse, where the beauty of their faces and the whiteness of their shoulders seemed to bloom in order to be gazed at, amid the sound of the music and of human voices.

Two friends, with their backs to the orchestra, were scanning those rows of elegance, that exhibition of real or false charms, of jewels, of luxury and of pretension which displayed itself in all parts of the Grand Théâtre, and one of them, Roger de Salnis, said to his companion, Bernard Grandin: "Just look how beautiful the Comtesse de Mascaret still is."

The older man in turn looked through his opera glasses at a tall lady in a box opposite. She appeared to be still very young, and her striking beauty seemed to attract all eyes in every corner of the house. Her pale complexion, of an ivory tint, gave her the appearance of a statue, while a small diamond coronet glistened on her black hair like a streak of light.

When he had looked at her for some time, Bernard Grandin replied with a jocular accent of sincere conviction: "You may well call her beautiful!"

"How old do you think she is?"

"Wait a moment. I can tell you exactly, for I have known her since she was a child and I saw her make her *début* into society when she was quite a girl. She is—she is—thirty—thirty-six."

"Impossible!"

"I am sure of it."

"She looks twenty-five."

"She has had seven children."

"It is incredible."

"And what is more, they are all seven alive, as she is a very good mother. I occasionally go to the house, which is a very quiet and pleasant one, where one may see the phenomenon of the family in the midst of society."

"How very strange! And have there never been any reports about her?"

"Never."

"But what about her husband? He is peculiar, is he not?"

"Yes and no. Very likely there has been a little drama between them, one of those little domestic dramas which one suspects, never finds out exactly, but guesses at pretty closely."

"What is it?"

"I do not know anything about it. Mascaret leads a very fast life now, after being a model husband. As long as he remained a good spouse he had a shocking temper, was crabbed and easily took offence, but since he has been leading his present wild life he has become quite different. But one might surmise that he has some trouble, a worm gnawing somewhere, for he has aged very much."

Thereupon the two friends talked philosophically for some minutes about the secret, unknowable troubles

which differences of character or perhaps physical antipathies, which were not perceived at first, give rise to in families, and then Roger de Salnis, who was still looking at Madame de Mascaret through his opera glasses, said: "It is almost incredible that that woman can have had seven children!"

"Yes, in eleven years; after which, when she was thirty, she refused to have any more, in order to take her place in society, which she seems likely to do for many years."

"Poor women!"

"Why do you pity them?"

"Why? Ah! my dear fellow, just consider! Eleven years in a condition of motherhood for such a woman! What a hell! All her youth, all her beauty, every hope of success, every poetical ideal of a brilliant life sacrificed to that abominable law of reproduction which turns the normal woman into a mere machine for bringing children into the world."

"What would you have? It is only Nature!"

"Yes, but I say that Nature is our enemy, that we must always fight against Nature, for she is continually bringing us back to an animal state. You may be sure that God has not put anything on this earth that is clean, pretty, elegant or accessory to our ideal; the human brain has done it. It is man who has introduced a little grace, beauty, unknown charm and mystery into creation by singing about it, interpreting it, by admiring it as a poet, idealizing it as an artist and by explaining it through science, doubtless making mistakes, but finding ingenious reasons, hidden grace and beauty, unknown charm and mystery in the various phenomena of Nature. God created only coarse beings, full of the germs of disease. who, after a few years

of bestial enjoyment, grow old and infirm, with all the ugliness and all the want of power of human decrepitude. He seems to have made them only in order that they may reproduce their species in an ignoble manner and then die like ephemeral insects. I said *reproduce their species in an ignoble manner* and I adhere to that expression. What is there as a matter of fact more ignoble and more repugnant than that act of reproduction of living beings, against which all delicate minds always have revolted and always will revolt? Since all the organs which have been invented by this economical and malicious Creator serve two purposes, why did He not choose another method of performing that sacred mission, which is the noblest and the most exalted of all human functions? The mouth, which nourishes the body by means of material food, also diffuses abroad speech and thought. Our flesh renews itself of its own accord, while we are thinking about it. The olfactory organs; through which the vital air reaches the lungs, communicate all the perfumes of the world to the brain: the smell of flowers, of woods, of trees, of the sea. The ear, which enables us to communicate with our fellow men, has also allowed us to invent music, to create dreams, happiness, infinite and even physical pleasure by means of sound! But one might say that the cynical and cunning Creator wished to prohibit man from ever ennobling and idealizing his intercourse with women. Nevertheless man has found love, which is not a bad reply to that sly Deity, and he has adorned it with so much poetry that woman often forgets the sensual part of it. Those among us who are unable to deceive themselves have invented vice and refined debauchery, which is another way of laughing at God and paying homage, immodest homage, to beauty.

"But the normal man begets children just like an animal coupled with another by law.

"Look at that woman! Is it not abominable to think that such a jewel, such a pearl, born to be beautiful, admired, fêted and adored, has spent eleven years of her life in providing heirs for the Comte de Mascarot?"

Bernard Grandin replied with a laugh: "There is a great deal of truth in all that, but very few people would understand you."

Salnis became more and more animated. "Do you know how I picture God myself?" he said. "As an enormous, creative organ beyond our ken, who scatters millions of worlds into space, just as one single fish would deposit its spawn in the sea. He creates because it is His function as God to do so, but He does not know what He is doing and is stupidly prolific in His work and is ignorant of the combinations of all kinds which are produced by His scattered germs. The human mind is a lucky little local, passing accident which was totally unforeseen, and condemned to disappear with this earth and to recommence perhaps here or elsewhere the same or different with fresh combinations of eternally new beginnings. We owe it to this little lapse of intelligence on His part that we are very uncomfortable in this world which was not made for us, which had not been prepared to receive us, to lodge and feed us or to satisfy reflecting beings, and we owe it to Him also that we have to struggle without ceasing against what are still called the designs of Providence, when we are really refined and civilized beings."

Grandin, who was listening to him attentively as he had long known the surprising outbursts of his imagination, asked him: "Then you believe that human thought is the spontaneous product of blind divine generation?"

"Naturally! A fortuitous function of the nerve centres of our brain, like the unforeseen chemical action due to new mixtures and similar also to a charge of electricity, caused by friction or the unexpected proximity of some substance, similar to all phenomena caused by the infinite and fruitful fermentation of living matter.

"But, my dear fellow, the truth of this must be evident to any one who looks about him. If the human mind, ordained by an omniscient Creator, had been intended to be what it has become, exactly, inquiring, agitated, tormented—so different from mere animal thought and resignation—would the world which was created to receive the beings which we now are have been this unpleasant little park for small game, this salad patch, this wooded, rocky and spherical kitchen garden where your improvident Providence had destined us to live naked, in caves or under trees, nourished on the flesh of slaughtered animals, our brethren, or on raw vegetables nourished by the sun and the rain?

"But it is sufficient to reflect for a moment, in order to understand that this world was not made for such creatures as we are. Thought, which is developed by a miracle in the nerves of the cells in our brain, powerless, ignorant and confused as it is, and as it will always remain, makes all of us who are intellectual beings eternal and wretched exiles on earth.

"Look at this earth, as God has given it to those who inhabit it. Is it not visibly and solely made, planted and covered with forests for the sake of animals? What is there for us? Nothing. And for them, everything, and they have nothing to do but to eat or go hunting and eat each other, according to their instincts, for God never foresaw gentleness and peaceable manners; He only

foresaw the death of creatures which were bent on destroying and devouring each other. Are not the quail, the pigeon and the partridge the natural prey of the hawk? the sheep, the stag and the ox that of the great flesh-eating animals, rather than meat to be fattened and served up to us with truffles, which have been unearthed by pigs for our special benefit?

"As to ourselves, the more civilized, intellectual and refined we are, the more we ought to conquer and subdue that animal instinct, which represents the will of God in us. And so, in order to mitigate our lot as brutes, we have discovered and made everything, beginning with houses, then exquisite food, sauces, sweetmeats, pastry, drink, stuffs, clothes, ornaments, beds, mattresses, carriages, railways and innumerable machines, besides arts and sciences, writing and poetry. Every ideal comes from us as do all the amenities of life, in order to make our existence as simple reproducers, for which divine Providence solely intended us, less monotonous and less hard.

"Look at this theatre. Is there not here a human world created by us, unforeseen and unknown to eternal fate, intelligible to our minds alone, a sensual and intellectual distraction, which has been invented solely by and for that discontented and restless little animal, man?

"Look at that woman, Madame de Mascarot. God intended her to live in a cave, naked or wrapped up in the skins of wild animals. But is she not better as she is? But, speaking of her, does any one know why and how her brute of a husband, having such a companion by his side, and especially after having been boorish enough to make her a mother seven times, has suddenly left her, to run after bad women?"

Grandin replied: "Oh! my dear fellow, this is probably the only reason. He found that raising a family was becoming too expensive, and from reasons of domestic economy he has arrived at the same principles which you lay down as a philosopher."

Just then the curtain rose for the third act, and they turned round, took off their hats and sat down.

IV

The Comte and Comtesse Mascaret were sitting side by side in the carriage which was taking them home from the Opera, without speaking. But suddenly the husband said to his wife: "Gabrielle!"

"What do you want?"

"Don't you think that this has lasted long enough?"

"What?"

"The horrible punishment to which you have condemned me for the last six years?"

"What do you want? I cannot help it."

"Then tell me which of them it is."

"Never."

"Think that I can no longer see my children or feel them round me, without having my heart burdened with this doubt. Tell me which of them it is, and I swear that I will forgive you and treat it like the others."

"I have not the right to do so."

"Do you not see that I can no longer endure this life, this thought which is wearing me out, or this question which I am constantly asking myself, this question which tortures me each time I look at them? It is driving me mad."

"Then you have suffered a great deal?" she said.

"Terribly. Should I, without that, have accepted the horror of living by your side, and the still greater horror of feeling and knowing that there is one among them whom I cannot recognize and who prevents me from loving the others?"

"Then you have really suffered very much?" she repeated.

And he replied in a constrained and sorrowful voice:

"Yes, for do I not tell you every day that it is intolerable torture to me? Should I have remained in that house, near you and them, if I did not love them? Oh! You have behaved abominably toward me. All the affection of my heart I have bestowed upon my children, and that you know. I am for them a father of the olden time, as I was for you a husband of one of the families of old, for by instinct I have remained a natural man, a man of former days. Yes, I will confess it, you have made me terribly jealous, because you are a woman of another race, of another soul, with other requirements. Oh! I shall never forget the things you said to me, but from that day I troubled myself no more about you. I did not kill you, because then I should have had no means on earth of ever discovering which of our—of your children is not mine. I have waited, but I have suffered more than you would believe, for I can no longer venture to love them, except, perhaps, the two eldest; I no longer venture to look at them, to call them to me, to kiss them; I cannot take them on my knee without asking myself, 'Can it be this one?' I have been correct in my behavior toward you for six years, and even kind and complaisant. Tell me the truth, and I swear that I will do nothing unkind."

He thought, in spite of the darkness of the carriage,

that he could perceive that she was moved, and feeling certain that she was going to speak at last, he said: "I beg you, I beseech you to tell me——" he said.

"I have been more guilty than you think perhaps," she replied, "but I could no longer endure that life of continual motherhood, and I had only one means of driving you from me. I lied before God and I lied, with my hand raised to my children's head, for I never have wronged you."

He seized her arm in the darkness, and squeezing it as he had done on that terrible day of their drive in the Bois de Boulogne, he stammered: "Is that true?"

"It is true."

But, wild with grief, he said with a groan: "I shall have fresh doubts that will never end! When did you lie, the last time or now? How am I to believe you at present? How can one believe a woman after that? I shall never again know what I am to think. I would rather you had said to me, 'It is Jacques or it is Jeanne.'"

The carriage drove into the courtyard of the house and when it had drawn up in front of the steps the count alighted first, as usual, and offered his wife his arm to mount the stairs. As soon as they reached the first floor he said: "May I speak to you for a few moments longer?" And she replied, "I am quite willing."

They went into a small drawing-room and a footman, in some surprise, lighted the wax candles. As soon as he had left the room and they were alone the count continued: "How am I to know the truth? I have begged you a thousand times to speak, but you have remained dumb, impenetrable, inflexible, inexorable, and now to-day you tell me that you have been lying. For six years you have actually allowed me to believe such

a thing! No, you are lying now, I do not know why, but out of pity for me, perhaps?"

She replied in a sincere and convincing manner: "If I had not done so, I should have had four more children in the last six years!"

"Can a mother speak like that?"

"Oh!" she replied, "I do not feel that I am the mother of children who never have been born; it is enough for me to be the mother of those that I have and to love them with all my heart. I am a woman of the civilized world, monsieur—we all are—and we are no longer, and we refuse to be, mere females to restock the earth."

She got up, but he seized her hands. "Only one word, Gabrielle. Tell me the truth!"

"I have just told you. I never have dishonored you."

He looked her full in the face, and how beautiful she was, with her gray eyes, like the cold sky. In her dark hair sparkled the diamond coronet, like a radiance. He suddenly felt, felt by a kind of intuition, that this grand creature was not merely a being destined to perpetuate the race, but the strange and mysterious product of all our complicated desires which have been accumulating in us for centuries but which have been turned aside from their primitive and divine object and have wandered after a mystic, imperfectly perceived and intangible beauty. There are some women like that, who blossom only for our dreams, adorned with every poetical attribute of civilization, with that ideal luxury, coquetry and esthetic charm which surround woman, a living statue that brightens our life.

Her husband remained standing before her, stupefied at his tardy and obscure discovery, confusedly hitting on the cause of his former jealousy and understanding

it all very imperfectly, and at last he said: "I believe you, for I feel at this moment that you are not lying, and before I really thought that you were."

She put out her hand to him: "We are friends then?"

He took her hand and kissed it and replied: "We are friends. Thank you, Gabrielle."

Then he went out, still looking at her, and surprised that she was still so beautiful and feeling a strange emotion arising in him.

THE FALSE GEMS

MONSIEUR LANTIN had met the young girl at a reception at the house of the second head of his department, and had fallen head over heels in love with her.

She was the daughter of a provincial tax collector, who had been dead several years. She and her mother came to live in Paris, where the latter, who made the acquaintance of some of the families in her neighborhood, hoped to find a husband for her daughter.

They had very moderate means, and were honorable, gentle, and quiet.

The young girl was a perfect type of the virtuous woman in whose hands every sensible young man dreams of one day intrusting his happiness. Her simple beauty had the charm of angelic modesty, and the imperceptible smile which constantly hovered about the lips seemed to be the reflection of a pure and lovely soul. Her praises resounded on every side. People never tired of repeating: "Happy the man who wins her love! He could not find a better wife."

Monsieur Lantin, then chief clerk in the Department of the Interior, enjoyed a snug little salary of three thousand five hundred francs, and he proposed to this model young girl, and was accepted.

He was unspeakably happy with her. She governed his household with such clever economy that they seemed to live in luxury. She lavished the most delicate attentions on her husband, coaxed and fondled him; and so

great was her charm that six years after their marriage, Monsieur Lantin discovered that he loved his wife even more than during the first days of their honeymoon.

He found fault with only two of her tastes: Her love for the theatre, and her taste for imitation jewelry. Her friends (the wives of some petty officials) frequently procured for her a box at the theatre, often for the first representations of the new plays; and her husband was obliged to accompany her, whether he wished it or not, to these entertainments which bored him excessively after his day's work at the office.

After a time, Monsieur Lantin begged his wife to request some lady of her acquaintance to accompany her, and to bring her home after the theatre. She opposed this arrangement, at first; but, after much persuasion, finally consented, to the infinite delight of her husband.

Now, with her love for the theatre, came also the desire for ornaments. Her costumes remained as before, simple, in good taste, and always modest; but she soon began to adorn her ears with huge rhinestones, which glittered and sparkled like real diamonds. Around her neck she wore strings of false pearls, on her arms bracelets of imitation gold, and combs set with glass jewels.

Her husband frequently remonstrated with her, saying:

"My dear, as you cannot afford to buy real jewelry, you ought to appear adorned with your beauty and modesty alone, which are the rarest ornaments of your sex."

But she would smile sweetly, and say:

"What can I do? I am so fond of jewelry. It is my only weakness. We cannot change our nature."

Then she would wind the pearl necklace round her fingers, make the facets of the crystal gems sparkle, and say:

"Look! are they not lovely? One would swear they were real."

Monsieur Lantin would then answer, smilingly:

"You have bohemian tastes, my dear."

Sometimes, of an evening, when they were enjoying a *tête-à-tête* by the fireside, she would place on the tea table the morocco leather box containing the "trash," as Monsieur Lantin called it. She would examine the false gems with a passionate attention, as though they imparted some deep and secret joy; and she often persisted in passing a necklace around her husband's neck, and, laughing heartily, would exclaim: "How droll you look!" Then she would throw herself into his arms, and kiss him affectionately.

One evening, in winter, she had been to the opera, and returned home chilled through and through. The next morning she coughed, and eight days later she died of inflammation of the lungs.

Monsieur Lantin's despair was so great that his hair became white in one month. He wept unceasingly; his heart was broken as he remembered her smile, her voice, every charm of his dead wife.

Time did not assuage his grief. Often, during office hours, while his colleagues were discussing the topics of the day, his eyes would suddenly fill with tears, and he would give vent to his grief in heartrending sobs. Everything in his wife's room remained as it was during her lifetime; all her furniture, even her clothing, being left as it was on the day of her death. Here he was wont to seclude himself daily and think of her who had been his treasure—the joy of his existence.

But life soon became a struggle. His income, which, in the hands of his wife, covered all household expenses, was now no longer sufficient for his own immediate

wants; and he wondered how she could have managed to buy such excellent wine and the rare delicacies which he could no longer procure with his modest resources.

He incurred some debts, and was soon reduced to absolute poverty. One morning, finding himself without a cent in his pocket, he resolved to sell something, and immediately the thought occurred to him of disposing of his wife's paste jewels, for he cherished in his heart a sort of rancor against these "deceptions," which had always irritated him in the past. The very sight of them spoiled, somewhat, the memory of his lost darling.

To the last days of her life she had continued to make purchases, bringing home new gems almost every evening, and he turned them over some time before finally deciding to sell the heavy necklace, which she seemed to prefer, and which, he thought, ought to be worth about six or seven francs; for it was of very fine workmanship, though only imitation.

He put it in his pocket, and started out in search of what seemed a reliable jeweler's shop. At length he found one, and went in, feeling a little ashamed to expose his misery, and also to offer such a worthless article for sale.

"Sir," said he to the merchant, "I would like to know what this is worth."

The man took the necklace, examined it, called his clerk, and made some remarks in an undertone; he then put the ornament back on the counter, and looked at it from a distance to judge of the effect.

Monsieur Lantin, annoyed at all these ceremonies, was on the point of saying: "Oh! I know well enough it is not worth anything," when the jeweler said: "Sir, that necklace is worth from twelve to fifteen thousand

francs; but I could not buy it, unless you can tell me exactly where it came from."

The widower opened his eyes wide and remained gaping, not comprehending the merchant's meaning. Finally he stammered: "You say—are you sure?" The other replied, drily: "You can try elsewhere, and see if any one will offer you more. I consider it worth fifteen thousand at the most. Come back here, if you cannot do better."

Monsieur Lantin, beside himself with astonishment, took up the necklace and left the store. He wished time for reflection.

Once outside, he felt inclined to laugh, and said to himself: "The fool! Oh, the fool! Had I only taken him at his word! That jeweler cannot distinguish real diamonds from the imitation article."

A few minutes after, he entered another store, in the Rue de la Paix. As soon as the proprietor glanced at the necklace, he cried out:

"Ah, *parbleu!* I know it well; it was bought here."

Monsieur Lantin, greatly disturbed, asked:

"How much is it worth?"

"Well, I sold it for twenty thousand francs. I am willing to take it back for eighteen thousand, when you inform me, according to our legal formality, how it came to be in your possession."

This time, Monsieur Lantin was dumfounded. He replied:

"But—but—examine it well. Until this moment I was under the impression that it was imitation."

The jeweler asked:

"What is your name, sir?"

"Lantin—I am in the employ of the Minister of the Interior. I live at number sixteen Rue des Martyrs."

The merchant looked through his books, found the entry, and said: "That necklace was sent to Madame Lantin's address, sixteen Rue des Martyrs, July 20, 1876."

The two men looked into each other's eyes—the widower speechless with astonishment; the jeweler scenting a thief. The latter broke the silence.

"Will you leave this necklace here for twenty-four hours?" said he; "I will give you a receipt."

Monsieur Lantin answered hastily: "Yes, certainly." Then, putting the ticket in his pocket, he left the store.

He wandered aimlessly through the streets, his mind in a state of dreadful confusion. He tried to reason, to understand. His wife could not afford to purchase such a costly ornament. Certainly not. But, then, it must have been a present!—a present!—a present, from whom? Why was it given her?

He stopped, and remained standing in the middle of the street. A horrible doubt entered his mind—She? Then, all the other jewels must have been presents, too! The earth seemed to tremble beneath him—the tree before him to be falling; he threw up his arms, and fell to the ground, unconscious. He recovered his senses in a pharmacy, into which the passers-by had borne him. He asked to be taken home, and, when he reached the house, he shut himself up in his room, and wept until nightfall. Finally, overcome with fatigue, he went to bed and fell into a heavy sleep.

The sun awoke him next morning, and he began to dress slowly to go to the office. It was hard to work after such shocks. He sent a letter to his employer, requesting to be excused. Then he remembered that he had to return to the jeweler's. He did not like

the idea; but he could not leave the necklace with that man. He dressed and went out.

It was a lovely day; a clear, blue sky smiled on the busy city below. Men of leisure were strolling about with their hands in their pockets.

Monsieur Lantin, observing them, said to himself: "The rich, indeed, are happy. With money it is possible to forget even the deepest sorrow. One can go where one pleases, and in travel find that distraction which is the surest cure for grief. Oh! if I were only rich!"

He perceived that he was hungry, but his pocket was empty. He again remembered the necklace. Eighteen thousand francs! Eighteen thousand francs! What a sum!

He soon arrived in the Rue de la Paix, opposite the jeweler's. Eighteen thousand francs! Twenty times he resolved to go in, but shame kept him back. He was hungry, however—very hungry—and not a cent in his pocket. He decided quickly, ran across the street, in order not to have time for reflection, and rushed into the store.

The proprietor immediately came forward, and politely offered him a chair; the clerks glanced at him knowingly.

"I have made inquiries, Monsieur Lantin," said the jeweler, "and if you are still resolved to dispose of the gems, I am ready to pay you the price I offered."

"Certainly, sir," stammered Monsieur Lantin.

Whereupon the proprietor took from a drawer eighteen large bills, counted, and handed them to Monsieur Lantin, who signed a receipt; and, with trembling hand, put the money into his pocket.

As he was about to leave the store, he turned toward

the merchant, who still wore the same knowing smile, and lowering his eyes, said:

"I have—I have other gems, which came from the same source. Will you buy them, also?"

The merchant bowed: "Certainly, sir."

Monsieur Lantin said gravely: "I will bring them to you." An hour later, he returned with the gems.

The large diamond earrings were worth twenty thousand francs; the bracelets, thirty-five thousand; the rings, sixteen thousand; a set of emeralds and sapphires, fourteen thousand; a gold chain with solitaire pendant, forty thousand—making the sum of one hundred and forty-three thousand francs.

The jeweler remarked, jokingly:

"There was a person who invested all her savings in precious stones."

Monsieur Lantin replied, seriously:

"It is only another way of investing one's money."

That day he lunched at Voisin's, and drank wine worth twenty francs a bottle. Then he hired a carriage and made a tour of the Bois. He gazed at the various turnouts with a kind of disdain, and could hardly refrain from crying out to the occupants:

"I, too, am rich!—I am worth two hundred thousand francs."

Suddenly he thought of his employer. He drove up to the bureau, and entered gaily, saying:

"Sir, I have come to resign my position. I have just inherited three hundred thousand francs."

He shook hands with his former colleagues, and confided to them some of his projects for the future; he then went off to dine at the Café Anglais.

He seated himself beside a gentleman of aristocratic bearing; and, during the meal, informed the latter con-

fidentially that he had just inherited a fortune of four hundred thousand francs.

For the first time in his life, he was not bored at the theatre, and spent the remainder of the night in a gay frolic.

Six months afterward, he married again. His second wife was a very virtuous woman; but had a violent temper. She caused him much sorrow.

THE HORLA

OR MODERN GHOSTS

*M*AY 8. What a lovely day! I have spent all the morning lying in the grass in front of my house, under the enormous plane tree that shades the whole of it. I like this part of the country and I like to live here because I am attached to it by old associations, by those deep and delicate roots which attach a man to the soil on which his ancestors were born and died, which attach him to the ideas and usages of the place as well as to the food, to local expressions, to the peculiar twang of the peasants, to the smell of the soil, of the villages and of the atmosphere itself.

I love my house in which I grew up. From my windows I can see the Seine which flows alongside my garden, on the other side of the high road, almost through my grounds, the great and wide Seine, which goes to Rouen and Havre, and is covered with boats passing to and fro.

On the left, down yonder, lies Rouen, that large town, with its blue roofs, under its pointed Gothic towers. These are innumerable, slender or broad, dominated by the spire of the cathedral, and full of bells which sound through the blue air on fine mornings, sending their sweet and distant iron clang even as far as my home; that song of the metal, which the breeze wafts in my direction, now stronger and now weaker, according as the wind is stronger or lighter.

What a delicious morning it was!

About eleven o'clock, a long line of boats drawn by a steam tug as big as a fly, and which scarcely puffed while emitting its thick smoke, passed my gate.

After two English schooners, whose red flag fluttered in space, there came a magnificent Brazilian three-master; it was perfectly white, and wonderfully clean and shining. I saluted it, I hardly knew why, except that the sight of the vessel gave me great pleasure.

May 12. I have had a slight feverish attack for the last few days, and I feel ill, or rather I feel low-spirited.

Whence come those mysterious influences which change our happiness into discouragement, and our self-confidence into diffidence? One might almost say that the air, the invisible air, is full of unknowable Powers whose mysterious presence we have to endure. I wake up in the best spirits, with an inclination to sing. Why? I go down to the edge of the water, and suddenly, after walking a short distance, I return home wretched, as if some misfortune were awaiting me there. Why? Is it a cold shiver which, passing over my skin, has upset my nerves and given me low spirits? Is it the form of the clouds, the color of the sky, or the color of the surrounding objects which is so changeable, that has troubled my thoughts as they passed before my eyes? Who can tell? Everything that surrounds us, everything that we see, without looking at it, everything that we touch, without knowing it, everything that we handle, without feeling it, all that we meet, without clearly distinguishing it, has a rapid, surprising and inexplicable effect upon us and upon our senses, and, through them, on our ideas and on our heart itself.

How profound that mystery of the Invisible is! We cannot fathom it with our miserable senses, with our

eyes which are unable to perceive what is either too small or too great, too near to us, or too far from us—neither the inhabitants of a star nor of a drop of water; nor with our ears that deceive us, for they transmit to us the vibrations of the air in sonorous notes. They are fairies who work the miracle of changing these vibrations into sound, and by that metamorphosis give birth to music, which makes the silent motion of nature musical . . . with our sense of smell which is less keen than that of a dog, . . . with our sense of taste which can scarcely distinguish the age of a wine!

Oh! If we only had other organs which would work other miracles in our favor, what a number of fresh things we might discover around us!

May 16. I am ill, decidedly! I was so well last month! I am feverish, horribly feverish, or rather I am in a state of feverish enervation, which makes my mind suffer as much as my body. I have, continually, that horrible sensation of some impending danger, that apprehension of some coming misfortune, or of approaching death; that presentiment which is, no doubt, an attack of some illness which is still unknown, which germinates in the flesh and in the blood.

May 17. I have just come from consulting my physician, for I could no longer get any sleep. He said my pulse was rapid, my eyes dilated, my nerves highly strung, but there were no alarming symptoms. I must take a course of shower baths and of bromide of potassium.

May 25. No change! My condition is really very peculiar. As the evening comes on, an incomprehensible feeling of disquietude seizes me, just as if night concealed some threatening disaster. I dine hurriedly, and then try to read, but I do not understand the words,

and can scarcely distinguish the letters. Then I walk up and down my drawing-room, oppressed by a feeling of confused and irresistible fear, the fear of sleep and fear of my bed.

About ten o'clock I go up to my room. As soon as I enter it I double-lock and bolt the door; I am afraid . . . of what? Up to the present time I have been afraid of nothing . . . I open my cupboards, and look under my bed; I listen . . . to what? How strange it is that a simple feeling of discomfort, impeded or heightened circulation, perhaps the irritation of a nerve filament, a slight congestion, a small disturbance in the imperfect delicate functioning of our living machinery, may turn the most light-hearted of men into a melancholy one, and make a coward of the bravest? Then, I go to bed, and wait for sleep as a man might wait for the executioner. I wait for its coming with dread, and my heart beats and my legs tremble, while my whole body shivers beneath the warmth of the bed-clothes, until all at once I fall asleep, as though one should plunge into a pool of stagnant water in order to drown. I do not feel it coming on as I did formerly, this perfidious sleep which is close to me and watching me, which is going to seize me by the head, to close my eyes and annihilate me.

I sleep—a long time—two or three hours perhaps—then a dream—no—a nightmare lays hold on me. I feel that I am in bed and asleep . . . I feel it and I know it . . . and I feel also that somebody is coming close to me, is looking at me, touching me, is getting on to my bed, is kneeling on my chest, is taking my neck between his hands and squeezing it . . . squeezing it with all his might in order to strangle me.

I struggle, bound by that terrible sense of power-

lessness which paralyzes us in our dreams; I try to cry out—but I cannot; I want to move—I cannot do so; I try, with the most violent efforts and breathing hard, to turn over and throw off this being who is crushing and suffocating me—I cannot!

And then, suddenly, I wake up, trembling and bathed in perspiration; I light a candle and find that I am alone, and after that crisis, which occurs every night, I at length fall asleep and slumber tranquilly till morning.

June 2. My condition has grown worse. What is the matter with me? The bromide does me no good, and the shower baths have no effect. Sometimes, in order to tire myself thoroughly, though I am fatigued enough already, I go for a walk in the forest of Roumare. I used to think at first that the fresh light and soft air, impregnated with the odor of herbs and leaves, would instill new blood into my veins and impart fresh energy to my heart. I turned into a broad hunting road, and then turned toward La Bouille, through a narrow path, between two rows of exceedingly tall trees, which placed a thick green, almost black, roof between the sky and me.

A sudden shiver ran through me, not a cold shiver, but a strange shiver of agony, and I hastened my steps, uneasy at being alone in the forest, afraid, stupidly and without reason, **of the profound solitude.** Suddenly it seemed to me as if I were being followed, that somebody was walking at my heels, close, quite close to me, near enough to touch me.

I turned round suddenly, but I was alone. I saw nothing behind me except the straight, broad path, empty and bordered by high trees, horribly empty; before me it

also extended until it was lost in the distance, and looked just the same, terrible.

I closed my eyes. Why? And then I began to turn round on one heel very quickly, just like a top. I nearly fell down, and opened my eyes; the trees were dancing round me and the earth heaved; I was obliged to sit down. Then, ah! I no longer remembered how I had come! What a strange idea! What a strange, strange idea! I did not the least know. I started off to the right, and got back into the avenue which had led me into the middle of the forest.

June 3. I have had a terrible night. I shall go away for a few weeks, for no doubt a journey will set me up again.

July 2. I have come back, quite cured, and have had a most delightful trip into the bargain. I have been to Mont Saint-Michel, which I had not seen before.

What a sight, when one arrives as I did, at Avranches toward the end of the day! The town stands on a hill, and I was taken into the public garden at the extremity of the town. I uttered a cry of astonishment. An extraordinarily large bay lay extended before me, as far as my eyes could reach, between two hills which were lost to sight in the mist; and in the middle of this immense yellow bay, under a clear, golden sky, a peculiar hill rose up, sombre and pointed in the midst of the sand. The sun had just disappeared, and under the still flaming sky appeared the outline of that fantastic rock which bears on its summit a fantastic monument.

At daybreak I went out to it. The tide was low, as it had been the night before, and I saw that wonderful abbey rise up before me as I approached it. After sev-

eral hours' walking, I reached the enormous mass of rocks which supports the little town, dominated by the great church. Having climbed the steep and narrow street, I entered the most wonderful Gothic building that has ever been built to God on earth, as large as a town, full of low rooms which seem buried beneath vaulted roofs, and lofty galleries supported by delicate columns.

I entered this gigantic granite gem, which is as light as a bit of lace, covered with towers, with slender belfries with spiral staircases, which raise their strange heads that bristle with chimeras, with devils, with fantastic animals, with monstrous flowers, to the blue sky by day, and to the black sky by night, and are connected by finely carved arches.

When I had reached the summit I said to the monk who accompanied me: "Father, how happy you must be here!" And he replied: "It is very windy here, monsieur"; and so we began to talk while watching the rising tide, which ran over the sand and covered it as with a steel cuirass.

And then the monk told me stories, all the old stories belonging to the place, legends, nothing but legends.

One of them struck me forcibly. The country people, those belonging to the Mount, declare that at night one can hear voices talking on the sands, and then that one hears two goats bleating, one with a strong, the other with a weak voice. Incredulous people declare that it is nothing but the cry of the sea birds, which occasionally resembles bleatings, and occasionally, human lamentations; but belated fishermen swear that they have met an old shepherd wandering between tides on the sands around the little town. His head is completely concealed by his cloak and he is followed by a billy goat

with a man's face, and a nanny goat with a woman's face, both having long, white hair and talking incessantly and quarreling in an unknown tongue. Then suddenly they cease and begin to bleat with all their might.

"Do you believe it?" I asked the monk. "I scarcely know," he replied, and I continued: "If there are other beings besides ourselves on this earth, how comes it that we have not known it long since, or why have *you* not seen them? How is it that *I* have not seen them?" He replied: "Do we see the hundred-thousandth part of what exists? Look here; there is the wind, which is the strongest force in nature, which knocks down men, and blows down buildings, uproots trees, raises the sea into mountains of water, destroys cliffs and casts great ships on the rocks; the wind which kills, which whistles, which sighs, which roars—have you ever seen it, and can you see it? It exists for all that, however."

I was silent before this simple reasoning. That man was a philosopher, or perhaps a fool; I could not say which exactly, so I held my tongue. What he had said had often been in my own thoughts.

July 3. I have slept badly; certainly there is some feverish influence here, for my coachman is suffering in the same way as I am. When I went back home yesterday, I noticed his singular paleness, and I asked him: "What is the matter with you, Jean?" "The matter is that I never get any rest, and my nights devour my days. Since your departure, monsieur, there has been a spell over me."

However, the other servants are all well, but I am very much afraid of having another attack myself.

July 4. I am decidedly ill again; for my old nightmares have returned. Last night I felt somebody leaning on me and sucking my life from between my lips.

Yes, he was sucking it out of my throat, like a leech. Then he got up, satiated, and I woke up, so exhausted, crushed and weak that I could not move. If this continues for a few days, I shall certainly go away again.

July 5. Have I lost my reason? What happened last night is so strange that my head wanders when I think of it!

I had locked my door, as I do now every evening, and then, being thirsty, I drank half a glass of water, and accidentally noticed that the water bottle was full up to the cut-glass stopper.

Then I went to bed and fell into one of my terrible sleeps, from which I was aroused in about two hours by a still more frightful shock.

Picture to yourself a sleeping man who is being murdered and who wakes up with a knife in his lung, and whose breath rattles, who is covered with blood, and who can no longer breathe and is about to die, and does not understand—there you have it.

Having recovered my senses, I was thirsty again, so I lit a candle and went to the table on which stood my water bottle. I lifted it up and tilted it over my glass, but nothing came out. It was empty! It was completely empty! At first I could not understand it at all, and then suddenly I was seized by such a terrible feeling that I had to sit down, or rather I fell into a chair! Then I sprang up suddenly to look about me; then I sat down again, overcome by astonishment and fear, in front of the transparent glass bottle! I looked at it with fixed eyes, trying to conjecture, and my hands trembled! Somebody had drunk the water, but who? I? I without any doubt. It could surely only be I. In that case I was a somnambulist; I lived, without knowing it, that mysterious double life which

makes us doubt whether there are not two beings in us, or whether a strange, unknowable and invisible being does not at such moments, when our soul is in a state of torpor, animate our captive body, which obeys this other being, as it obeys us, and more than it obeys ourselves.

Oh! Who will understand my horrible agony? Who will understand the emotion of a man who is sound in mind, wide awake, full of common sense, who looks in horror through the glass of a water bottle for a little water that disappeared while he was asleep? I remained thus until it was daylight, without venturing to go to bed again.

July 6. I am going mad. Again all the contents of my water bottle have been drunk during the night—or rather, I have drunk it!

But is it I? Is it I? Who could it be? Who? Oh! God! Am I going mad? Who will save me?

July 10. I have just been through some surprising ordeals. Decidedly I am mad! And yet! . . .

On July 6, before going to bed, I put some wine, milk, water, bread and strawberries on my table. Somebody drank—I drank—all the water and a little of the milk, but neither the wine, bread, nor the strawberries were touched.

On the seventh of July I renewed the same experiment, with the same results, and on July 8, I left out the water and the milk, and nothing was touched.

Lastly, on July 9, I put only water and milk on my table, taking care to wrap up the bottles in white muslin and to tie down the stoppers. Then I rubbed my lips, my beard and my hands with pencil lead, and went to bed.

Irresistible sleep seized me, which was soon followed

by a terrible awakening. I had not moved, and there was no mark of lead on the sheets. I rushed to the table. The muslin round the bottles remained intact; I undid the string, trembling with fear. All the water had been drunk, and so had the milk! Ah! Great God! . . .

I must start for Paris immediately.

July 12. Paris. I must have lost my head during the last few days! I must be the plaything of my enervated imagination, unless I am really a somnambulist, or that I have been under the power of one of those hitherto unexplained influences which are called suggestions. In any case, my mental state bordered on madness, and twenty-four hours of Paris sufficed to restore my equilibrium.

Yesterday, after doing some business and paying some visits which instilled fresh and invigorating air into my soul, I wound up the evening at the *Théâtre-Français*. A play by Alexandre Dumas the younger was being acted, and his active and powerful imagination completed my cure. Certainly solitude is dangerous for active minds. We require around us men who can think and talk. When we are alone for a long time, we people space with phantoms.

I returned along the boulevards to my hotel in excellent spirits. Amid the jostling of the crowd I thought, not without irony, of my terrors and surmises of the previous week, because I had believed—yes, I had believed—that an invisible being lived beneath my roof. How weak our brains are, and how quickly they are terrified and led into error by a small incomprehensible fact.

Instead of saying simply: "I do not understand be-

cause I do not know the cause," we immediately imagine terrible mysteries and supernatural powers.

July 14. Fête of the Republic. I walked through the streets, amused as a child at the firecrackers and flags. Still it is very foolish to be merry on a fixed date, by Government decree. The populace is an imbecile flock of sheep, now stupidly patient, and now in ferocious revolt. Say to it: "Amuse yourself," and it amuses itself. Say to it: "Go and fight with your neighbor," and it goes and fights. Say to it: "Vote for the Emperor," and it votes for the Emperor, and then say to it: "Vote for the Republic," and it votes for the Republic.

Those who direct it are also stupid; only, instead of obeying men, they obey principles which can only be stupid, sterile, and false, for the very reason that they are principles, that is to say, ideas which are considered as certain and unchangeable, in this world where one is certain of nothing, since light is an illusion and noise is an illusion.

July 16. I saw some things yesterday that troubled me very much.

I was dining at the house of my cousin, Madame Sablé, whose husband is colonel of the 76th Chasseurs at Limoges. There were two young women there, one of whom had married a medical man, Dr. Parent, who devotes much attention to nervous diseases and to the remarkable manifestations taking place at this moment under the influence of hypnotism and suggestion.

He related to us at some length the wonderful results obtained by English scientists and by the doctors of the Nancy school; and the facts which he adduced appeared to me so strange that I declared that I was altogether incredulous.

"We are," he declared, "on the point of discovering one of the most important secrets of nature; I mean to say, one of its most important secrets on this earth, for there are certainly others of a different kind of importance up in the stars, yonder. Ever since man has thought, ever since he has been able to express and write down his thoughts, he has felt himself close to a mystery which is impenetrable to his gross and imperfect senses, and he endeavors to supplement through his intellect the inefficiency of his senses. As long as that intellect remained in its elementary stage, these apparitions of invisible spirits assumed forms that were commonplace, though terrifying. Thence sprang the popular belief in the supernatural, the legends of wandering spirits, of fairies, of gnomes, ghosts, I might even say the legend of God; for our conceptions of the workman-creator, from whatever religion they may have come down to us, are certainly the most mediocre, the most stupid and the most incredible inventions that ever sprang from the terrified brain of any human beings. Nothing is truer than what Voltaire says: 'God made man in His own image, but man has certainly paid Him back in his own coin.'

"However, for rather more than a century men seem to have had a presentiment of something new. Mesmer and some others have put us on an unexpected track, and, especially within the last two or three years, we have arrived at really surprising results."

My cousin, who is also very incredulous, smiled, and Dr. Parent said to her: "Would you like me to try and send you to sleep, madame?" "Yes, certainly."

She sat down in an easy chair, and he began to look at her fixedly, so as to fascinate her. I suddenly felt

myself growing uncomfortable, my heart beating rapidly and a choking sensation in my throat. I saw Madame Sablé's eyes becoming heavy, her mouth twitching and her bosom heaving, and at the end of ten minutes she was asleep.

"Go behind her," the doctor said to me, and I took a seat behind her. He put a visiting card into her hands, and said to her: "This is a looking-glass; what do you see in it?" And she replied: "I see my cousin." "What is he doing?" "He is twisting his mustache." "And now?" "He is taking a photograph out of his pocket." "Whose photograph is it?" "His own."

That was true, and the photograph had been given me that same evening at the hotel.

"What is his attitude in this portrait?" "He is standing up with his hat in his hand."

She saw, therefore, on that card, on that piece of white pasteboard, as if she had seen it in a mirror.

The young women were frightened, and exclaimed: "That is enough! Quite, quite enough!"

But the doctor said to Madame Sablé authoritatively: "You will rise at eight o'clock to-morrow morning; then you will go and call on your cousin at his hotel and ask him to lend you five thousand francs which your husband demands of you, and which he will ask for when he sets out on his coming journey."

Then he woke her up.

On returning to my hotel, I thought over this curious séance, and I was assailed by doubts, not as to my cousin's absolute and undoubted good faith, for I had known her as well as if she were my own sister ever since she was a child, but as to a possible trick on the doctor's part. Had he not, perhaps, kept a glass hidden in his hand, which he showed to the young woman in

her sleep, at the same time as he did the card? Professional conjurors do things that are just as singular.

So I went home and to bed, and this morning, at about half-past eight, I was awakened by my valet, who said to me: "Madame Sablé has asked to see you immediately, monsieur." I dressed hastily and went to her.

She sat down in some agitation, with her eyes on the floor, and without raising her veil she said to me: "My dear cousin, I am going to ask a great favor of you." "What is it, cousin?" "I do not like to tell you, and yet I must. I am in absolute need of five thousand francs." "What, you?" "Yes, I, or rather my husband, who has asked me to procure them for him."

I was so thunderstruck that I stammered out my answers. I asked myself whether she had not really been making fun of me with Dr. Parent, if it was not merely a very well-acted farce which had been rehearsed beforehand. On looking at her attentively, however, all my doubts disappeared. She was trembling with grief, so painful was this step to her, and I was convinced that her throat was full of sobs.

I knew that she was very rich and I continued: "What! Has not your husband five thousand francs at his disposal? Come, think. Are you sure that he commissioned you to ask me for them?"

She hesitated for a few seconds, as if she were making a great effort to search her memory, and then she replied: "Yes . . . yes, I am quite sure of it." "He has written to you?"

She hesitated again and reflected, and I guessed the torture of her thoughts. She did not know. She only knew that she was to borrow five thousand francs of me for her husband. So she told a lie. "Yes, he has written to me." "When, pray? You did not mention

it to me yesterday." "I received his letter this morning." "Can you show it me?" "No; no . . . no . . . it contained private matters . . . things too personal to ourselves. . . . I burned it." "So your husband runs into debt?"

She hesitated again, and then murmured: "I do not know." Thereupon I said bluntly: "I have not five thousand francs at my disposal at this moment, my dear cousin."

She uttered a kind of cry as if she were in pain and said: "Oh! oh! I beseech you, I beseech you to get them for me. . . ."

She got excited and clasped her hands as if she were praying to me! I heard her voice change its tone; she wept and stammered, harassed and dominated by the irresistible order that she had received.

"Oh! oh! I beg you to . . . if you knew what I am suffering . . . I want them to-day."

I had pity on her: "You shall have them by and by, I swear to you." "Oh! thank you! thank you! How kind you are."

I continued: "Do you remember what took place at your house last night?" "Yes." "Do you remember that Dr. Parent sent you to sleep?" "Yes." "Oh! Very well, then; he ordered you to come to me this morning to borrow five thousand francs, and at this moment you are obeying that suggestion."

She considered for a few moments, and then replied: "But as it is my husband who wants them——"

For a whole hour I tried to convince her, but could not succeed, and when she had gone I went to the doctor. He was just going out, and he listened to me with a smile, and said: "Do you believe now?" "Yes, I cannot help it." "Let us go to your cousin's."

She was already half asleep on a reclining chair, overcome with fatigue. The doctor felt her pulse, looked at her for some time with one hand raised toward her eyes, which she closed by degrees under the irresistible power of this magnetic influence, and when she was asleep, he said:

"Your husband does not require the five thousand francs any longer! You must, therefore, forget that you asked your cousin to lend them to you, and, if he speaks to you about it, you will not understand him."

Then he woke her up, and I took out a pocket book and said: "Here is what you asked me for this morning, my dear cousin." But she was so surprised that I did not venture to persist; nevertheless, I tried to recall the circumstance to her, but she denied it vigorously, thought I was making fun of her, and, in the end, very nearly lost her temper.

There! I have just come back, and I have not been able to eat any lunch, for this experiment has altogether upset me.

July 19. Many people to whom I told the adventure laughed at me. I no longer know what to think. The wise man says: "It may be!"

July 21. I dined at Bougival, and then I spent the evening at a boatmen's ball. Decidedly everything depends on place and surroundings. It would be the height of folly to believe in the supernatural on the Ile de la Grenouillère . . . but on the top of Mont Saint-Michel? . . . and in India? We are terribly influenced by our surroundings. I shall return home next week.

July 30. I came back to my own house yesterday. Everything is going on well.

August 2. Nothing new; it is splendid weather, and

I spend my days in watching the Seine flowing past.

August 4. Quarrels among my servants. They declare that the glasses are broken in the cupboards at night. The footman accuses the cook, who accuses the seamstress, who accuses the other two. Who is the culprit? It is a clever person who can tell.

August 6. This time I am not mad. I have seen . . . I have seen . . . I have seen! . . . I can doubt no longer . . . I have seen it! . . .

I was walking at two o'clock among my rose trees, in the full sunlight . . . in the walk bordered by autumn roses which are beginning to fall. As I stopped to look at a *Géant de Bataille*, which had three splendid blossoms, I distinctly saw the stalk of one of the roses near me bend, as if an invisible hand had bent it, and then break, as if that hand had picked it! Then the flower raised itself, following the curve which a hand would have described in carrying it toward a mouth, and it remained suspended in the transparent air, all alone and motionless, a terrible red spot, three yards from my eyes. In desperation I rushed at it to take it! I found nothing; it had disappeared. Then I was seized with furious rage against myself, for a reasonable and serious man should not have such hallucinations.

But was it an hallucination? I turned round to look for the stalk, and I found it at once, on the bush, freshly broken, between two other roses which remained on the branch. I returned home then, my mind greatly disturbed; for I am certain now, as certain as I am of the alternation of day and night, that there exists close to me an invisible being that lives on milk and water, that can touch objects, take them and change their places; that is, consequently, endowed with a material nature,

although it is imperceptible to our senses, and that lives as I do, under my roof——

August 7. I slept tranquilly. He drank the water out of my decanter, but did not disturb my sleep.

I wonder if I am mad. As I was walking just now in the sun by the river side, doubts as to my sanity arose in me; not vague doubts such as I have had hitherto, but definite, absolute doubts. I have seen mad people, and I have known some who have been quite intelligent, lucid, even clear-sighted in every concern of life, except on one point. They spoke clearly, readily, profoundly on everything, when suddenly their mind struck upon the shoals of their madness and broke to pieces there, and scattered and floundered in that furious and terrible sea, full of rolling waves, fogs and squalls, which is called *madness*.

I certainly should think that I was mad, absolutely mad, if I were not conscious, did not perfectly know my condition, did not fathom it by analyzing it with the most complete lucidity. I should, in fact, be only a rational man who was laboring under an hallucination. Some unknown disturbance must have arisen in my brain, one of those disturbances which physiologists of the present day try to note and to verify; and that disturbance must have caused a deep gap in my mind and in the sequence and logic of my ideas. Similar phenomena occur in dreams which lead us among the most unlikely phantasmagoria, without causing us any surprise, because our verifying apparatus and our organ of control are asleep, while our imaginative faculty is awake and active. Is it not possible that one of the imperceptible notes of the cerebral keyboard has been paralyzed in me? Some men lose the recollection of proper names, of verbs, or of numbers, or merely of

dates, in consequence of an accident. The localization of all the variations of thought has been established nowadays; why, then, should it be surprising if my faculty of controlling the unreality of certain hallucinations were dormant in me for the time being?

I thought of all this as I walked by the side of the water. The sun shone brightly on the river and made earth delightful, while it filled me with a love for life, for the swallows, whose agility always delights my eye, for the plants by the river side, the rustle of whose leaves is a pleasure to my ears.

By degrees, however, an inexplicable feeling of discomfort seized me. It seemed as if some unknown force were numbing and stopping me, were preventing me from going further, and were calling me back. I felt that painful wish to return which oppresses you when you have left a beloved invalid at home, and when you are seized with a presentiment that he is worse.

I, therefore, returned in spite of myself, feeling certain that I should find some bad news awaiting me, a letter or a telegram. There was nothing, however, and I was more surprised and uneasy than if I had had another fantastic vision.

August 8. I spent a terrible evening yesterday. He does not show himself any more, but I feel that he is near me, watching me, looking at me, penetrating me, dominating me, and more redoubtable when he hides himself thus than if he were to manifest his constant and invisible presence by supernatural phenomena. However, I slept.

August 9. Nothing, but I am afraid.

August 10. Nothing; what will happen to-morrow?

August 11. Still nothing; I cannot stop at home

with this fear hanging over me and these thoughts in my mind; I shall go away.

August 12. Ten o'clock at night. All day long I have been trying to get away, and have not been able. I wished to accomplish this simple and easy act of freedom—to go out—to get into my carriage in order to go to Rouen—and I have not been able to do it. What is the reason?

August 13. When one is attacked by certain maladies, all the springs of our physical being appear to be broken, all our energies destroyed, all our muscles relaxed; our bones, too, have become as soft as flesh, and our blood as liquid as water. I am experiencing these sensations in my moral being in a strange and distressing manner. I have no longer any strength, any courage, any self-control, not even any power to set my own will in motion. I have no power left to will anything; but some one does it for me and I obey.

August 14. I am lost! Somebody possesses my soul and dominates it. Somebody orders all my acts, all my movements, all my thoughts. I am no longer anything in myself, nothing except an enslaved and terrified spectator of all the things I do. I wish to go out; I cannot. He does not wish to, and so I remain, trembling and distracted, in the arm-chair in which he keeps me sitting. I merely wish to get up and to rouse myself; I cannot! I am riveted to my chair, and my chair adheres to the ground in such a manner that no power could move us.

Then, suddenly, I must, I must go to the bottom of my garden to pick some strawberries and eat them, and I go there. I pick the strawberries and eat them! Oh, my God! My God! Is there a God? If there be one, deliver me! Save me! Succor me! Pardon! Pity!

Mercy! Save me! Oh, what sufferings! What torture! What horror!

August 15. This is certainly the way in which my poor cousin was possessed and controlled when she came to borrow five thousand francs of me. She was under the power of a strange will which had entered into her, like another soul, like another parasitic and dominating soul. Is the world coming to an end?

But who is he, this invisible being that rules me? This unknowable being, this rover of a supernatural race?

Invisible beings exist, then! How is it, then, that since the beginning of the world they have never manifested themselves precisely as they do to me? I have never read of anything that resembles what goes on in my house. Oh, if I could only leave it, if I could only go away, escape, and never return! I should be saved, but I cannot.

August 16. I managed to escape to-day for two hours, like a prisoner who finds the door of his dungeon accidentally open. I suddenly felt that I was free and that he was far away, and so I gave orders to harness the horses as quickly as possible, and I drove to Rouen. Oh, how delightful to be able to say to a man who obeys you: "Go to Rouen!"

I made him pull up before the library, and I begged them to lend me Dr. Herrmann Herestauss' treatise on the unknown inhabitants of the ancient and modern world.

Then, as I was getting into my carriage, I intended to say: "To the railway station!" but instead of this I shouted—I did not say, but I shouted—in such a loud voice that all the passers-by turned round: "Home!" and I fell back on the cushion of my car-

riage, overcome by mental agony. He had found me again and regained possession of me.

August 17. Oh, what a night! What a night! And yet it seems to me that I ought to rejoice. I read until one o'clock in the morning! Herestauss, doctor of philosophy and theogony, wrote the history of the manifestation of all those invisible beings which hover around man, or of whom he dreams. He describes their origin, their domain, their power; but none of them resembles the one which haunts me. One might say that man, ever since he began to think, has had a foreboding fear of a new being, stronger than himself, his successor in this world, and that, feeling his presence, and not being able to foresee the nature of that master, he has, in his terror, created the whole race of occult beings, of vague phantoms born of fear.

Having, therefore, read until one o'clock in the morning, I went and sat down at the open window, in order to cool my forehead and my thoughts, in the calm night air. It was very pleasant and warm! How I should have enjoyed such a night formerly!

There was no moon, but the stars darted out their rays in the dark heavens. Who inhabits those worlds? What forms, what living beings, what animals are there yonder? What do the thinkers in those distant worlds know more than we do? What can they do more than we can? What do they see which we do not know? Will not one of them, some day or other, traversing space, appear on our earth to conquer it, just as the Norsemen formerly crossed the sea in order to subjugate nations more feeble than themselves?

We are so weak, so defenseless, so ignorant, so small, we who live on this particle of mud which revolves in a drop of water.

I fell asleep, dreaming thus in the cool night air, and when I had slept for about three-quarters of an hour, I opened my eyes without moving, awakened by I know not what confused and strange sensation. At first I saw nothing, and then suddenly it appeared to me as if a page of a book which had remained open on my table turned over of its own accord. Not a breath of air had come in at my window, and I was surprised, and waited. In about four minutes, I saw, I saw, yes, I saw with my own eyes, another page lift itself up and fall down on the others, as if a finger had turned it over. My armchair was empty, appeared empty, but I knew that he was there, he, and sitting in my place, and that he was reading. With a furious bound, the bound of an enraged wild beast that springs at its tamer, I crossed my room to seize him, to strangle him, to kill him! But before I could reach it, the chair fell over as if somebody had run away from me—my table rocked, my lamp fell and went out, and my window closed as if some thief had been surprised and had fled out into the night, shutting it behind him.

So he had run away; he had been afraid; he, afraid of me!

But—but—to-morrow—or later—some day or other—I should be able to hold him in my clutches and crush him against the ground! Do not dogs occasionally bite and strangle their masters?

August 18. I have been thinking the whole day long. Oh, yes, I will obey him, follow his impulses, fulfill all his wishes, show myself humble, submissive, a coward. He is the stronger; but the hour will come——

August 19. I know—I know—I know all! I have just read the following in the *Revue du Monde Scien-*

zifque: "A curious piece of news comes to us from Rio de Janeiro. Madness, an epidemic of madness, which may be compared to that contagious madness which attacked the people of Europe in the Middle Ages, is at this moment raging in the Province of San-Paolo. The terrified inhabitants are leaving their houses, saying that they are pursued, possessed, dominated like human cattle by invisible, though tangible beings, a species of vampire, which feed on their life while they are asleep, and who, besides, drink water and milk without appearing to touch any other nourishment.

"Professor Don Pedro Henriques, accompanied by several medical savants, has gone to the Province of San-Paolo, in order to study the origin and the manifestations of this surprising madness on the spot, and to propose such measures to the Emperor as may appear to him to be most fitted to restore the mad population to reason."

Ah! Ah! I remember now that fine Brazilian three-master which passed in front of my windows as it was going up the Seine, on the 8th day of last May! I thought it looked so pretty, so white and bright! That Being was on board of her, coming from there, where its race originated. And it saw me! It saw my house which was also white, and it sprang from the ship on to the land. Oh, merciful heaven!

Now I know, I can divine. The reign of man is over, and he has come. He who was feared by primitive man; whom disquieted priests exorcised; whom sorcerers evoked on dark nights, without having seen him appear, to whom the imagination of the transient masters of the world lent all the monstrous or graceful forms of gnomes, spirits, genii, fairies and familiar spirits. After the coarse conceptions of primitive fear, more

clear-sighted men foresaw it more clearly. Mesmer divined it, and ten years ago physicians accurately discovered the nature of his power, even before he exercised it himself. They played with this new weapon of the Lord, the sway of a mysterious will over the human soul, which had become a slave. They called it magnetism, hypnotism, suggestion—what do I know? I have seen them amusing themselves like rash children with this horrible power! Woe to us! Woe to man! He has come, the—the—what does he call himself—the—I fancy that he is shouting out his name to me and I do not hear him—the—yes—he is shouting it out—I am listening—I cannot—he repeats it—the—Horla—I hear—the Horla—it is he—the Horla—he has come!

Ah! the vulture has eaten the pigeon; the wolf has eaten the lamb; the lion has devoured the sharp-horned buffalo; man has killed the lion with an arrow, with a sword, with gunpowder; but the Horla will make of man what we have made of the horse and of the ox; his chattel, his slave and his food, by the mere power of his will. Woe to us!

But, nevertheless, the animal sometimes revolts and kills the man who has subjugated it. I should also like—I shall be able to—but I must know him, touch him, see him! Scientists say that animals' eyes, being different from ours, do not distinguish objects as ours do. And my eye cannot distinguish this newcomer who is oppressing me.

Why? Oh, now I remember the words of the monk at Mont Saint-Michel: "Can we see the hundred-thousandth part of what exists? See here; there is the wind, which is the strongest force in nature, which knocks men, and bowls down buildings, uproots trees,

raises the sea into mountains of water, destroys cliffs and casts great ships on the breakers; the wind which kills, which whistles, which sighs, which roars—have you ever seen it, and can you see it? It exists for all that, however!”

And I went on thinking; my eyes are so weak, so imperfect, that they do not even distinguish hard bodies, if they are as transparent as glass! If a glass without tinfoil behind it were to bar my way, I should run into it, just as a bird which has flown into a room breaks its head against the window-panes. A thousand things, moreover, deceive man and lead him astray. Why should it then be surprising that he cannot perceive an unknown body through which the light passes?

A new being! Why not? It was assuredly bound to come! Why should we be the last? We do not distinguish it any more than all the others created before us! The reason is, that its nature is more perfect, its body finer and more finished than ours, that ours is so weak, so awkwardly constructed, encumbered with organs that are always tired, always on the strain like machinery that is too complicated, which lives like a plant and like a beast, nourishing itself with difficulty on air, herbs and flesh, an animal machine which is a prey to maladies, to malformations, to decay; broken-winded, badly regulated, simple and eccentric, ingeniously badly made, at once a coarse and a delicate piece of workmanship, the rough sketch of a being that might become intelligent and grand.

We are only a few, so few in this world, from the oyster up to man. Why should there not be one more, once that period is passed which separates the successive apparitions from all the different species?

Why not one more? Why not, also, other trees with

immense, splendid flowers, perfuming whole regions? Why not other elements besides fire, air, earth and water? There are four, only four, those nursing fathers of various beings! What a pity! Why are there not forty, four hundred, four thousand? How poor everything is, how mean and wretched! grudgingly produced, roughly constructed, clumsily made! Ah, the elephant and the hippopotamus, what grace! And the camel, what elegance!

But the butterfly, you will say, a flying flower! I dream of one that should be as large as a hundred worlds, with wings whose shape, beauty, colors and motion I cannot even express. But I see it—it flutters from star to star, refreshing them and perfuming them with the light and harmonious breath of its flight! And the people up there look at it as it passes in an ecstasy of delight!

What is the matter with me? It is he, the Horla who haunts me, and who makes me think of these foolish things! He is within me, he is becoming my soul; I shall kill him!

August 19. I shall kill him. I have seen him! Yesterday I sat down at my table and pretended to write very assiduously. I knew quite well that he would come prowling round me, quite close to me, so close that I might perhaps be able to touch him, to seize him. And then—then I should have the strength of desperation; I should have my hands, my knees, my chest, my forehead, my teeth to strangle him, to crush him, to bite him, to tear him to pieces. And I watched for him with all my over-excited senses.

I had lighted my two lamps and the eight wax candles

on my mantelpiece, as if with this light I could discover him.

My bedstead, my old oak post bedstead, stood opposite to me; on my right was the fireplace; on my left, the door which was carefully closed, after I had left it open for some time in order to attract him; behind me was a very high wardrobe with a looking-glass in it, before which I stood to shave and dress every day, and in which I was in the habit of glancing at myself from head to foot every time I passed it.

I pretended to be writing in order to deceive him, for he also was watching me, and suddenly I felt—I was certain that he was reading over my shoulder, that he was there, touching my ear.

I got up, my hands extended, and turned round so quickly that I almost fell. Eh! well? It was as bright as at midday, but I did not see my reflection in the mirror! It was empty, clear, profound, full of light! But my figure was not reflected in it—and I, I was opposite to it! I saw the large, clear glass from top to bottom, and I looked at it with unsteady eyes; and I did not dare to advance; I did not venture to make a movement, feeling that he was there, but that he would escape me again, he whose imperceptible body had absorbed my reflection.

How frightened I was! And then, suddenly, I began to see myself in a mist in the depths of the looking-glass, in a mist as it were a sheet of water; and it seemed to me as if this water were flowing clearer every moment. It was like the end of an eclipse. Whatever it was that hid me did not appear to possess any clearly defined outlines, but a sort of opaque transparency which gradually grew clearer.

At last I was able to distinguish myself completely, as I do every day when I look at myself.

I had seen it! And the horror of it remained with me, and makes me shudder even now.

August 20. How could I kill it, as I could not get hold of it? Poison? But it would see me mix it with the water; and then, would our poisons have any effect on its impalpable body? No—no—no doubt about the matter—— Then—then?——

August 21. I sent for a blacksmith from Rouen, and ordered iron shutters for my room, such as some private hotels in Paris have on the ground floor, for fear of burglars, and he is going to make me an iron door as well. I have made myself out a coward, but I do not care about that!

September 10.—Rouen, Hotel Continental. It is done—it is done—but is he dead? My mind is thoroughly upset by what I have seen.

Well then, yesterday, the locksmith having put on the iron shutters and door, I left everything open until midnight, although it was getting cold.

Suddenly I felt that he was there, and joy, mad joy, took possession of me. I got up softly, and walked up and down for some time, so that he might not suspect anything; then I took off my boots and put on my slippers carelessly; then I fastened the iron shutters, and, going back to the door, quickly double-locked it with a padlock, putting the key into my pocket.

Suddenly I noticed that he was moving restlessly round me, that in his turn he was frightened and was ordering me to let him out. I nearly yielded; I did not, however, but, putting my back to the door, I half

opened it, just enough to allow me to go out backward, and as I am very tall my head touched the casing. I was sure that he had not been able to escape, and I shut him up quite alone, quite alone. What happiness! I had him fast. Then I ran downstairs; in the drawing-room, which was under my bedroom, I took the two lamps and I poured all the oil on the carpet, the furniture, everywhere; then I set fire to it and made my escape, after having carefully double-locked the door.

I went and hid myself at the bottom of the garden, in a clump of laurel bushes. How long it seemed! How long it seemed! Everything was dark, silent, motionless, not a breath of air and not a star, but heavy banks of clouds which one could not see, but which weighed, oh, so heavily on my soul.

I looked at my house and waited. How long it was! I already began to think that the fire had gone out of its own accord, or that he had extinguished it, when one of the lower windows gave way under the violence of the flames, and a long, soft, caressing sheet of red flame mounted up the white wall, and enveloped it as far as the roof. The light fell on the trees, the branches, and the leaves, and a shiver of fear pervaded them also! The birds awoke, a dog began to howl, and it seemed to me as if the day were breaking! Almost immediately two other windows flew into fragments, and I saw that the whole of the lower part of my house was nothing but a terrible furnace. But a cry, a horrible, shrill, heartrending cry, a woman's cry, sounded through the night, and two garret windows were opened! I had forgotten the servants! I saw their terror-stricken faces, and their arms waving frantically.

Then, overwhelmed with horror, I set off to run to the village, shouting: "Help! help! fire! fire!" I met

some people who were already coming to the scene, and I returned with them.

By this time the house was nothing but a horrible and magnificent funeral pile, a monstrous funeral pile which lit up the whole country, a funeral pile where men were burning, and where he was burning also, He, He, my prisoner, that new Being, the new master, the Horla!

Suddenly the whole roof fell in between the walls, and a volcano of flames darted up to the sky. Through all the windows which opened on that furnace, I saw the flames darting, and I thought that he was there, in that kiln, dead.

Dead? Perhaps?— His body? Was not his body, which was transparent, indestructible by such means as would kill ours?

If he were not dead?— Perhaps time alone has power over that Invisible and Redoubtable Being. Why this transparent, unrecognizable body, this body belonging to a spirit, if it also has to fear ills, infirmities and premature destruction?

Premature destruction? All human terror springs from that! After man, the Horla. After him who can die every day, at any hour, at any moment, by any accident, came the one who would die only at his own proper hour, day, and minute, because he had touched the limits of his existence!

No—no—without any doubt—he is not dead— Then—then—I suppose I must kill myself! . . .

A SALE

THE defendants, Césaire-Isidore Brument and Prosper-Napoléon Cornu, appeared before the Court of Assizes of the Seine-Inférieure, on a charge of attempted murder, by drowning, of Mme. Brument, lawful wife of the first of the aforementioned.

The two prisoners sat side by side on the traditional bench. They were two peasants; the first was small and stout, with short arms, short legs, and a round head with a red pimply face, planted directly on his trunk, which was also round and short, and with apparently no neck. He was a raiser of pigs and lived at Cacheville-la-Goupil, in the district of Criquetot.

Cornu (Prosper-Napoléon) was thin, of medium height, with enormously long arms. His head was on crooked, his jaw awry, and he squinted. A blue blouse, as long as a shirt, hung down to his knees, and his yellow hair, which was scanty and plastered down on his head, gave his face a worn-out, dirty look, a dilapidated look that was frightful. He had been nicknamed "the curé" because he could imitate to perfection the chanting in church, and even the sound of the serpent. This talent attracted to his café—for he was a saloon keeper at Criquetot—a great many customers who preferred the "mass at Cornu" to the mass in church.

Mme. Brument, seated on the witness bench, was a thin peasant woman who seemed to be always asleep. She sat there motionless, her hands crossed on her

knees, gazing fixedly before her with a stupid expression.

The judge continued his interrogation.

"Well, then, Mme. Brument, they came into your house and threw you into a barrel full of water. Tell us the details. Stand up."

She rose. She looked as tall as a flag pole with her cap which looked like a white skull cap. She said in a drawing tone:

"I was shelling beans. Just then they came in. I said to myself, 'What is the matter with them? They do not seem natural, they seem up to some mischief.' They watched me sideways, like this, especially Cornu, because he squints. I do not like to see them together, for they are two good-for-nothings when they are in company. I said: 'What do you want with me?' They did not answer. I had a sort of mistrust——"

The defendant Brument interrupted the witness hastily, saying:

"I was full."

Then Cornu, turning towards his accomplice, said in the deep tones of an organ:

"Say that we were both full, and you will be telling no lie."

The judge, severely:

"You mean by that that you were both drunk?"

Brument: "There can be no question about it."

Cornu: "That might happen to anyone."

The judge to the victim: "Continue your testimony, woman Brument."

"Well, Brument said to me, 'Do you wish to earn a hundred sous?' 'Yes,' I replied, seeing that a hundred sous are not picked up in a horse's tracks. Then he said: 'Open your eyes and do as I do,' and he went

to fetch the large empty barrel which is under the rain pipe in the corner, and he turned it over and brought it into my kitchen, and stuck it down in the middle of the floor, and then he said to me: 'Go and fetch water until it is full.'

"So I went to the pond with two pails and carried water, and still more water for an hour, seeing that the barrel was as large as a vat, saving your presence, *m'sieu le président*.

"All this time Brument and Cornu were drinking a glass, and then another glass, and then another. They were finishing their drinks when I said to them: 'You are full, fuller than this barrel.' And Brument answered me: 'Do not worry, go on with your work, your turn will come, each one has his share.' I paid no attention to what he said as he was full.

"When the barrel was full to the brim, I said: 'There, that's done.'

"And then Cornu gave me a hundred sous, not Brument, Cornu; it was Cornu gave them to me. And Brument said: 'Do you wish to earn a hundred sous more?' 'Yes,' I said, for I am not accustomed to presents like that. Then he said: 'Take off your clothes.'

" 'Take off my clothes?'

" 'Yes,' he said.

" 'How many shall I take off?'

" 'If it worries you at all, keep on your chemise, that won't bother us.'

"A hundred sous is a hundred sous, and I have to undress myself; but I did not fancy undressing before those two good-for-nothings. I took off my cap, and then my jacket, and then my skirt, and then my sabots. Brument said, 'Keep on your stockings, also; we are good fellows.'

"And Cornu said, too, 'We are good fellows.'

"So there I was, almost like mother Eve. And they got up from their chairs, but could not stand straight, they were so full, saving your presence, m'sieu le président.

"I said to myself: 'What are they up to?'

"And Brument said: 'Are you ready?'

"And Cornu said: 'I'm ready!'

"And then they took me, Brument by the head, and Cornu by the feet, as one might take, for instance, a sheet that has been washed. Then I began to bawl.

"And Brument said: 'Keep still, wretched creature!'

"And they lifted me up in the air and put me into the barrel, which was full of water, so that I had a check of the circulation, a chill to my very insides.

"And Brument said: 'Is that all?'

"Cornu said: 'That is all.'

"Brument said: 'The head is not in, that will make a difference in the measure.'

"Cornu said: 'Put in her head.'

"And then Brument pushed down my head as if to drown me, so that the water ran into my nose, so that I could already see Paradise. And he pushed it down, and I disappeared.

"And then he must have been frightened. He pulled me out and said: 'Go and get dry, carcass.'

"As for me, I took to my heels and ran as far as M. le curé's. He lent me a skirt belonging to his servant, for I was almost in a state of nature, and he went to fetch Maître Chicot, the country watchman who went to Criquetot to fetch the police who came to my house with me.

"Then we found Brument and Cornu fighting each other like two rams.

"Brument was bawling: 'It isn't true, I tell you that there is at least a cubic metre in it. It is the method that was no good.'

"Cornu bawled: 'Four pails, that is almost half a cubic metre. You need not reply, that's what it is.'

"The police captain put them both under arrest. I have no more to tell."

She sat down. The audience in the court room laughed. The jurors looked at one another in astonishment. The Judge said:

"Defendant Cornu, you seem to have been the instigator of this infamous plot. What have you to say?"

And Cornu rose in his turn.

"Judge," he replied, "I was full."

The Judge answered gravely:

"I know it. Proceed."

"I will. Well, Brument came to my place about nine o'clock, and ordered two drinks, and said: 'There's one for you, Cornu.' I sat down opposite him and drank, and out of politeness, I offered him a glass. Then he returned the compliment and so did I, and so it went on from glass to glass until noon, when we were full.

"Then Brument began to cry. That touched me. I asked him what was the matter. He said: 'I must have a thousand francs by Thursday.' That cooled me off a little, you understand. Then he said to me all at once: 'I will sell you my wife.'

"I was full, and I was a widower. You understand, that stirred me up. I did not know his wife, but she was a woman, wasn't she? I asked him: 'How much would you sell her for?'

"He reflected, or pretended to reflect. When one is

full one is not very clear-headed, and he replied: 'I will sell her by the cubic metre.'

"That did not surprise me, for I was as drunk as he was, and I knew what a cubic metre is in my business. It is a thousand litres, that suited me.

"But the price remained to be settled. All depends on the quality. I said: 'How much do you want a cubic metre?'

"He answered: 'Two thousand francs.'

"I gave a bound like a rabbit, and then I reflected that a woman ought not to measure more than three hundred litres. So I said: 'That's too dear.'

"He answered: 'I cannot do it for less. I should lose by it.'

"You understand, one is not a dealer in hogs for nothing. One understands one's business. But, if he is smart, the seller of bacon, I am smarter, seeing that I sell them also. Ha, Ha, Ha! So I said to him: 'If she were new, I would not say anything, but she has been married to you for some time, so she is not as fresh as she was. I will give you fifteen hundred francs a cubic metre, not a sou more. Will that suit you?'

"He answered: 'That will do. That's a bargain!'

"I agreed, and we started out, arm in arm. We must help each other in this world.

"But a fear came to me: 'How can you measure her unless you put her into the liquid?'

"Then he explained his idea, not without difficulty, for he was full. He said to me: 'I take a barrel, and fill it with water to the brim. I put her in it. All the water that comes out we will measure, that is the way to fix it.'

"I said: 'I see, I understand. But this water that

overflows will run away; how are you going to gather it up?’

“Then he began stuffing me and explained to me that all we should have to do would be to refill the barrel with the water his wife had displaced as soon as she should have left. All the water we should pour in would be the measure. I supposed about ten pails; that would be a cubic metre. He isn’t a fool, all the same, when he is drunk, that old horse.

“To be brief, we reached his house and I took a look at its mistress. A beautiful woman she certainly was not. Anyone can see her, for there she is. I said to myself: ‘I am disappointed, but never mind, she will be of value; handsome or ugly, it is all the same, is it not, monsieur le président?’ And then I saw that she was as thin as a rail. I said to myself: ‘She will not measure four hundred litres.’ I understand the matter, it being in liquids.

“She told you about the proceeding. I even let her keep on her chemise and stockings, to my own disadvantage.

“When that was done she ran away. I said: ‘Look out, Brument! she is escaping.’

“He replied: ‘Do not be afraid. I will catch her all right. She will have to come back to sleep. I will measure the deficit.’

“We measured. Not four pailfuls. Ha, Ha, Ha!”

The witness began to laugh so persistently that a gendarme was obliged to punch him in the back. Having quieted down, he resumed:

“In short, Brument exclaimed: ‘Nothing doing, that is not enough.’ I bawled and bawled, and bawled again, he punched me, I hit back. That would have kept on till the Day of Judgment, seeing we were both drunk.

"Then came the gendarmes! They swore at us, they took us off to prison. I want damages."

He sat down.

Brument confirmed in every particular the statements of his accomplice. The jury, in consternation, retired to deliberate.

At the end of an hour they returned a verdict of acquittal for the defendants, with some severe strictures on the dignity of marriage, and establishing the precise limitations of business transactions.

Brument went home to the domestic roof accompanied by his wife.

Cornu went back to his business.

THE STORY OF A FARM GIRL

PART I

AS the weather was very fine, the people on the farm had hurried through their dinner and had returned to the fields.

The servant, Rose, remained alone in the large kitchen, where the fire was dying out on the hearth beneath the large boiler of hot water. From time to time she dipped out some water and slowly washed her dishes, stopping occasionally to look at the two streaks of light which the sun threw across the long table through the window, and which showed the defects in the glass.

Three venturesome hens were picking up the crumbs under the chairs, while the smell of the poultry yard and the warmth from the cow stall came in through the half-open door, and a cock was heard crowing in the distance.

When she had finished her work, wiped down the table, dusted the mantelpiece and put the plates on the high dresser close to the wooden clock with its loud tick-tock, she drew a long breath, as she felt rather oppressed, without exactly knowing why. She looked at the black clay walls, the rafters that were blackened with smoke and from which hung spiders' webs, smoked herrings and strings of onions, and then she sat down, rather overcome by the stale odor from the earthen floor, on which so many things had been continually spilled and which the heat brought out. With

this there was mingled the sour smell of the pans of milk which were set out to raise the cream in the adjoining dairy.

She wanted to sew, as usual, but she did not feel strong enough, and so she went to the door to get a mouthful of fresh air, which seemed to do her good.

The fowls were lying on the steaming dunghill; some of them were scratching with one claw in search of worms, while the cock stood up proudly in their midst. When he crowed, the cocks in all the neighboring farmyards replied to him, as if they were uttering challenges from farm to farm.

The girl looked at them without thinking, and then she raised her eyes and was almost dazzled at the sight of the apple trees in blossom. Just then a colt, full of life and friskiness, jumped over the ditches and then stopped suddenly, as if surprised at being alone.

She also felt inclined to run; she felt inclined to move and to stretch her limbs and to repose in the warm, breathless air. She took a few undecided steps and closed her eyes, for she was seized with a feeling of animal comfort, and then she went to look for eggs in the hen loft. There were thirteen of them, which she took in and put into the storeroom; but the smell from the kitchen annoyed her again, and she went out to sit on the grass for a time.

The farmyard, which was surrounded by trees, seemed to be asleep. The tall grass, amid which the tall yellow dandelions rose up like streaks of yellow light, was of a vivid, fresh spring green. The apple trees cast their shade all round them, and the thatched roofs, on which grew blue and yellow irises, with their sword-like leaves, steamed as if the moisture of the stables and barns were coming through the straw.

The girl went to the shed, where the carts and buggies were kept. Close to it, in a ditch, there was a large patch of violets, whose fragrance was spread abroad, while beyond the slope the open country could be seen, where grain was growing, with clumps of trees in places, and groups of laborers here and there, who looked as small as dolls, and white horses like toys, who were drawing a child's cart, driven by a man as tall as one's finger.

She took up a bundle of straw, threw it into the ditch and sat down upon it. Then, not feeling comfortable, she undid it, spread it out and lay down upon it at full length on her back, with both arms under her head and her legs stretched out.

Gradually her eyes closed, and she was falling into a state of delightful languor. She was, in fact, almost asleep when she felt two hands on her bosom, and she sprang up at a bound. It was Jacques, one of the farm laborers, a tall fellow from Picardy, who had been making love to her for a long time. He had been herding the sheep, and, seeing her lying down in the shade, had come up stealthily and holding his breath, with glistening eyes and bits of straw in his hair.

He tried to kiss her, but she gave him a smack in the face, for she was as strong as he, and he was shrewd enough to beg her pardon; so they sat down side by side and talked amicably. They spoke about the favorable weather, of their master, who was a good fellow, then of their neighbors, of all the people in the country round, of themselves, of their village, of their youthful days, of their recollections, of their relations, who had left them for a long time, and it might be forever. She grew sad as she thought of it, while he, with one fixed idea in his head, drew closer to her.

"I have not seen my mother for a long time," she said. "It is very hard to be separated like that," and she directed her looks into the distance, toward the village in the north which she had left.

Suddenly, however, he seized her by the neck and kissed her again, but she struck him so violently in the face with her clenched fist that his nose began to bleed, and he got up and laid his head against the stem of a tree. When she saw that, she was sorry, and going up to him, she said: "Have I hurt you?" He, however, only laughed. "No, it was a mere nothing; only she had hit him right on the middle of the nose. What a devil!" he said, and he looked at her with admiration, for she had inspired him with a feeling of respect and of a very different kind of admiration which was the beginning of a real love for that tall, strong wench.

When the bleeding had stopped, he proposed a walk, as he was afraid of his neighbor's heavy hand, if they remained side by side like that much longer; but she took his arm of her own accord, in the avenue, as if they had been out for an evening's walk, and said: "It is not nice of you to despise me like that, Jacques." He protested, however. No, he did not despise her. He was in love with her, that was all. "So you really want to marry me?" she asked.

He hesitated and then looked at her sideways, while she looked straight ahead of her. She had fat, red cheeks, a full bust beneath her cotton jacket; thick, red lips; and her neck, which was almost bare, was covered with small beads of perspiration. He felt a fresh access of desire, and, putting his lips to her ear, he murmured: "Yes, of course I do."

Then she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him till they were both out of breath. From that mo-

ment the eternal story of love began between them. They plagued one another in corners; they met in the moonlight beside the haystack and gave each other bruises on the legs, under the table, with their heavy nailed boots. By degrees, however, Jacques seemed to grow tired of her; he avoided her, scarcely spoke to her, and did not try any longer to meet her alone, which made her sad and anxious; and soon she found that she was *enceinte*.

At first she was in a state of consternation, but then she got angry, and her rage increased every day because she could not meet him, as he avoided her most carefully. At last, one night, when every one in the farmhouse was asleep, she went out noiselessly in her petticoat, with bare feet, crossed the yard and opened the door of the stable where Jacques was lying in a large box of straw above his horses. He pretended to snore when he heard her coming, but she knelt down by his side and shook him until he sat up.

"What do you want?" he then asked her. And with clenched teeth, and trembling with anger, she replied: "I want—I want you to marry me, as you promised." But he only laughed and replied: "Oh! if a man were to marry all the girls with whom he has made a slip, he would have more than enough to do."

Then she seized him by the throat, threw him on his back, so that he could not get away from her, and, half strangling him, she shouted into his face: "I am *enceinte*, do you hear? I am *enceinte*!"

He gasped for breath, as he was almost choked, and so they remained, both of them, motionless and without speaking, in the dark silence, which was only broken by the noise made by a horse as he pulled the hay out of the manger and then slowly munched it.

When Jacques found that she was the stronger, he stammered out: "Very well, I will marry you, as that is the case." But she did not believe his promises. "It must be at once," she said. "You must have the banns put up." "At once," he replied. "Swear solemnly that you will." He hesitated for a few moments and then said: "I swear it, by Heaven."

Then she released her grasp and went away without another word.

She had no chance of speaking to him for several days; and, as the stable was now always locked at night, she was afraid to make any noise, for fear of creating a scandal. One morning, however, she saw another man come in at dinner time, and she said: "Has Jacques left?" "Yes," the man replied; "I have got his place."

This made her tremble so violently that she could not take the saucepan off the fire; and later, when they were all at work, she went up into her room and cried, burying her head in the bolster, so that she might not be heard. During the day, however, she tried to obtain some information without exciting any suspicion, but she was so overwhelmed by the thoughts of her misfortune that she fancied that all the people whom she asked laughed maliciously. All she learned, however, was that he had left the neighborhood altogether.

PART II

Then a cloud of constant misery began for her. She worked mechanically, without thinking of what she was doing, with one fixed idea in her head: "Suppose people were to know."

This continual feeling made her so incapable of reasoning that she did not even try to think of any means of avoiding the disgrace that she knew must ensue, which was irreparable and drawing nearer every day, and which was as sure as death itself. She got up every morning long before the others and persistently tried to look at her figure in a piece of broken looking-glass, before which she did her hair, as she was very anxious to know whether anybody would notice a change in her, and, during the day, she stopped working every few minutes to look at herself from top to toe, to see whether her apron did not look too short.

The months went on, and she scarcely spoke now, and when she was asked a question, did not appear to understand; but she had a frightened look, haggard eyes and trembling hands, which made her master say to her occasionally: "My poor girl, how stupid you have grown lately."

In church she hid behind a pillar, and no longer ventured to go to confession, as she feared to face the priest, to whom she attributed superhuman powers, which enabled him to read people's consciences; and at meal times the looks of her fellow servants almost made her faint with mental agony; and she was always fancying that she had been found out by the cowherd, a precocious and cunning little lad, whose bright eyes seemed always to be watching her.

One morning the postman brought her a letter, and as she had never received one in her life before she was so upset by it that she was obliged to sit down. Perhaps it was from him? But, as she could not read, she sat anxious and trembling with that piece of paper, covered with ink, in her hand. After a time, however, she put it into her pocket, as she did not venture to

confide her secret to any one. She often stopped in her work to look at those lines written at regular intervals, and which terminated in a signature, imagining vaguely that she would suddenly discover their meaning, until at last, as she felt half mad with impatience and anxiety, she went to the schoolmaster, who told her to sit down and read to her as follows:

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER: I write to tell you that I am very ill. Our neighbor, Monsieur Dentu, begs you to come, if you can.

"From your affectionate mother,

"CÉSAIRE DENTU, Deputy Mayor."

She did not say a word and went away, but as soon as she was alone her legs gave way under her, and she fell down by the roadside and remained there till night.

When she got back, she told the farmer her bad news, and he allowed her to go home for as long as she liked, and promised to have her work done by a charwoman and to take her back when she returned.

Her mother died soon after she got there, and the next day Rose gave birth to a seven-months child, a miserable little skeleton, thin enough to make anybody shudder, and which seemed to be suffering continually, to judge from the painful manner in which it moved its poor little hands, which were as thin as a crab's legs; but it lived for all that. She said she was married, but could not be burdened with the child, so she left it with some neighbors, who promised to take great care of it, and she went back to the farm.

But now in her heart, which had been wounded so long, there arose something like brightness, an unknown love for that frail little creature which she had left

behind her, though there was fresh suffering in that very love, suffering which she felt every hour and every minute, because she was parted from her child. What pained her most, however, was the mad longing to kiss it, to press it in her arms, to feel the warmth of its little body against her breast. She could not sleep at night; she thought of it the whole day long, and in the evening, when her work was done, she would sit in front of the fire and gaze at it intently, as people do whose thoughts are far away.

They began to talk about her and to tease her about her lover. They asked her whether he was tall, handsome and rich. When was the wedding to be and the christening? And often she ran away to cry by herself, for these questions seemed to hurt her like the prick of a pin; and, in order to forget their jokes, she began to work still more energetically, and, still thinking of her child, she sought some way of saving up money for it, and determined to work so that her master would be obliged to raise her wages.

By degrees she almost monopolized the work and persuaded him to get rid of one servant girl, who had become useless since she had taken to working like two; she economized in the bread, oil and candles; in the corn, which they gave to the chickens too extravagantly, and in the fodder for the horses and cattle, which was rather wasted. She was as miserly about her master's money as if it had been her own; and, by dint of making good bargains, of getting high prices for all their produce, and by baffling the peasants' tricks when they offered anything for sale, he, at last, entrusted her with buying and selling everything, with the direction of all the laborers, and with the purchase of provisions necessary for the household; so that, in a short time, she

became indispensable to him. She kept such a strict eye on everything about her that, under her direction, the farm prospered wonderfully, and for five miles around people talked of "Master Vallin's servant," and the farmer himself said everywhere: "That girl is worth more than her weight in gold."

But time passed by, and her wages remained the same. Her hard work was accepted as something that was due from every good servant, and as a mere token of good will; and she began to think rather bitterly that if the farmer could put fifty or a hundred crowns extra into the bank every month, thanks to her, she was still only earning her two hundred francs a year, neither more nor less; and so she made up her mind to ask for an increase of wages. She went to see the schoolmaster three times about it, but when she got there, she spoke about something else. She felt a kind of modesty in asking for money, as if it were something disgraceful; but, at last, one day, when the farmer was having breakfast by himself in the kitchen, she said to him, with some embarrassment, that she wished to speak to him particularly. He raised his head in surprise, with both his hands on the table, holding his knife, with its point in the air, in one, and a piece of bread in the other, and he looked fixedly at the girl, who felt uncomfortable under his gaze, but asked for a week's holiday, so that she might get away, as she was not very well. He acceded to her request immediately, and then added, in some embarrassment himself:

"When you come back, I shall have something to say to you myself."

PART III

The child was nearly eight months old, and she did not recognize it. It had grown rosy and chubby all over, like a little roll of fat. She threw herself on it, as if it had been some prey, and kissed it so violently that it began to scream with terror; and then she began to cry herself, because it did not know her, and stretched out its arms to its nurse as soon as it saw her. But the next day it began to know her, and laughed when it saw her, and she took it into the fields, and ran about excitedly with it, and sat down under the shade of the trees; and then, for the first time in her life, she opened her heart to somebody, although he could not understand her, and told him her troubles; how hard her work was, her anxieties and her hopes, and she quite tired the child with the violence of her caresses.

She took the greatest pleasure in handling it, in washing and dressing it, for it seemed to her that all this was the confirmation of her maternity; and she would look at it, almost feeling surprised that it was hers, and would say to herself in a low voice as she danced it in her arms: "It is my baby, it's my baby."

She cried all the way home as she returned to the farm and had scarcely got in before her master called her into his room; and she went, feeling astonished and nervous, without knowing why.

"Sit down there," he said. She sat down, and for some moments they remained side by side, in some embarrassment, with their arms hanging at their sides, as if they did not know what to do with them, and looking each other in the face, after the manner of peasants.

The farmer, a stout, jovial, obstinate man of forty-

five, who had lost two wives, evidently felt embarrassed, which was very unusual with him; but, at last, he made up his mind, and began to speak vaguely, hesitating a little, and looking out of the window as he talked. "How is it, Rose," he said, "that you have never thought of settling in life?" She grew as pale as death, and, seeing that she gave him no answer, he went on: "You are a good, steady, active and economical girl; and a wife like you would make a man's fortune."

She did not move, but looked frightened; she did not even try to comprehend his meaning, for her thoughts were in a whirl, as if at the approach of some great danger; so, after waiting for a few seconds, he went on: "You see, a farm without a mistress can never succeed, even with a servant like you." Then he stopped, for he did not know what else to say, and Rose looked at him with the air of a person who thinks that he is face to face with a murderer and ready to flee at the slightest movement he may make; but, after waiting for about five minutes, he asked her: "Well, will it suit you?" "Will what suit me, master?" And he said quickly: "Why, to marry me, by Heaven!"

She jumped up, but fell back on her chair, as if she had been struck, and there she remained motionless, like a person who is overwhelmed by some great misfortune. At last the farmer grew impatient and said: "Come, what more do you want?" She looked at him, almost in terror, then suddenly the tears came into her eyes, and she said twice in a choking voice: "I cannot, I cannot!" "Why not?" he asked. "Come, don't be silly; I will give you until to-morrow to think it over."

And he hurried out of the room, very glad to have got through with the matter, which had troubled him a good deal, for he had no doubt that she would the

next morning accept a proposal which she could never have expected and which would be a capital bargain for him, as he thus bound a woman to his interests who would certainly bring him more than if she had the best dowry in the district.

Neither could there be any scruples about an unequal match between them, for in the country every one is very nearly equal; the farmer works with his laborers, who frequently become masters in their turn, and the female servants constantly become the mistresses of the establishments without its making any change in their life or habits.

Rose did not go to bed that night. She threw herself, dressed as she was, on her bed, and she had not even the strength to cry left in her, she was so thoroughly dumfounded. She remained quite inert, scarcely knowing that she had a body, and without being at all able to collect her thoughts, though, at moments, she remembered something of what had happened, and then she was frightened at the idea of what might happen. Her terror increased, and every time the great kitchen clock struck the hour she broke out in a perspiration from grief. She became bewildered, and had the nightmare; her candle went out, and then she began to imagine that some one had cast a spell over her, as country people so often imagine, and she felt a mad inclination to run away, to escape and to flee before her misfortune, like a ship scudding before the wind.

An owl hooted; she shivered, sat up, passed her hands over her face, her hair, and all over her body, and then she went downstairs, as if she were walking in her sleep. When she got into the yard she stooped down, so as not to be seen by any prowling scamp, for the moon, which was setting, shed a bright light over the fields.

Instead of opening the gate she scrambled over the fence, and as soon as she was outside she started off. She went on straight before her, with a quick, springy trot, and from time to time she unconsciously uttered a piercing cry. Her long shadow accompanied her, and now and then some night bird flew over her head, while the dogs in the farmyards barked as they heard her pass; one even jumped over the ditch, and followed her and tried to bite her, but she turned round and gave such a terrible yell that the frightened animal ran back and cowered in silence in its kennel.

The stars grew dim, and the birds began to twitter; day was breaking. The girl was worn out and panting; and when the sun rose in the purple sky, she stopped, for her swollen feet refused to go any farther; but she saw a pond in the distance, a large pond whose stagnant water looked like blood under the reflection of this new day, and she limped on slowly with her hand on her heart, in order to dip both her feet in it. She sat down on a tuft of grass, took off her heavy shoes, which were full of dust, pulled off her stockings and plunged her legs into the still water, from which bubbles were rising here and there.

A feeling of delicious coolness pervaded her from head to foot, and suddenly, while she was looking fixedly at the deep pool, she was seized with dizziness, and with a mad longing to throw herself into it. All her sufferings would be over in there, over forever. She no longer thought of her child; she only wanted peace, complete rest, and to sleep forever, and she got up with raised arms and took two steps forward. She was in the water up to her thighs, and she was just about to throw herself in when sharp, pricking pains in her ankles made her jump back, and she uttered a cry

of despair, for, from her knees to the tips of her feet, long black leeches were sucking her lifeblood, and were swelling as they adhered to her flesh. She did not dare to touch them, and screamed with horror, so that her cries of despair attracted a peasant, who was driving along at some distance, to the spot. He pulled off the leeches one by one, applied herbs to the wounds, and drove the girl to her master's farm in his gig.

She was in bed for a fortnight, and as she was sitting outside the door on the first morning that she got up, the farmer suddenly came and planted himself before her. "Well," he said, "I suppose the affair is settled, isn't it?" She did not reply at first, and then, as he remained standing and looking at her intently with his piercing eyes, she said with difficulty: "No, master, I cannot." He immediately flew into a rage.

"You cannot, girl; you cannot? I should just like to know the reason why?" She began to cry, and repeated: "I cannot." He looked at her, and then exclaimed angrily: "Then I suppose you have a lover?" "Perhaps that is it," she replied, trembling with shame.

The man got as red as a poppy, and stammered out in a rage: "Ah! So you confess it, you slut! And pray who is the fellow? Some penniless, half-starved ragamuffin, without a roof to his head, I suppose? Who is it, I say?" And as she gave him no answer, he continued: "Ah! So you will not tell me. Then I will tell you; it is Jean Baudu?" "No, not he," he exclaimed. "Then it is Pierre Martin?" "Oh! no, master."

And he angrily mentioned all the young fellows in the neighborhood, while she denied that he had hit upon the right one, and every moment wiped her eyes with the corner of her blue apron. But he still tried to

find it out, with his brutish obstinacy, and, as it were scratching at her heart to discover her secret, just as a terrier scratches at a hole to try and get at the animal which he scents inside it. Suddenly, however, the man shouted: "By George! It is Jacques, the man who was here last year. They used to say that you were always talking together, and that you thought about getting married."

Rose was choking, and she grew scarlet, while her tears suddenly stopped and dried up on her cheeks, like drops of water on hot iron, and she exclaimed: "No, it is not he, it is not he!" "Is that really a fact?" asked the cunning peasant, who partly guessed the truth; and she replied, hastily: "I will swear it; I will swear it to you——" She tried to think of something by which to swear, as she did not venture to invoke sacred things, but he interrupted her: "At any rate, he used to follow you into every corner and devoured you with his eyes at meal times. Did you ever give him your promise, eh?"

This time she looked her master straight in the face. "No, never, never; I will solemnly swear to you that if he were to come to-day and ask me to marry him I would have nothing to do with him." She spoke with such an air of sincerity that the farmer hesitated, and then he continued, as if speaking to himself: "What, then? You have not had a *misfortune*, as they call it, or it would have been known, and as it has no consequences, no girl would refuse her master on that account. There must be something at the bottom of it, however."

She could say nothing; she had not the strength to speak, and he asked her again: "You will not?" "I

cannot, master," she said, with a sigh, and he turned on his heel.

She thought she had got rid of him altogether and spent the rest of the day almost tranquilly, but was as exhausted as if she had been turning the threshing machine all day in the place of the old white horse, and she went to bed as soon as she could and fell asleep immediately. In the middle of the night, however, two hands touching the bed woke her. She trembled with fear, but immediately recognized the farmer's voice, when he said to her: "Don't be frightened, Rose; I have come to speak to you." She was surprised at first, but when he tried to take liberties with her she understood and began to tremble violently, as she felt quite alone in the darkness, still heavy from sleep, and quite unprotected, with that man standing near her. She certainly did not consent, but she resisted, carelessly struggling against that instinct which is always strong in simple natures and very imperfectly protected by the undecided will of inert and gentle races. She turned her head now to the wall, and now toward the room, in order to avoid the attentions which the farmer tried to press on her, but she was weakened by fatigue, while he became brutal, intoxicated by desire.

They lived together as man and wife, and one morning he said to her: "I have put up our banns, and we will get married next month."

She did not reply, for what could she say? She did not resist, for what could she do?

PART IV

She married him. She felt as if she were in a pit with inaccessible sides from which she could never get out, and all kinds of misfortunes were hanging over her head, like huge rocks, which would fall on the first occasion. Her husband gave her the impression of a man whom she had robbed, and who would find it out some day or other. And then she thought of her child, who was the cause of her misfortunes, but who was also the cause of all her happiness on earth, and whom she went to see twice a year, though she came back more unhappy each time.

But she gradually grew accustomed to her life, her fears were allayed, her heart was at rest, and she lived with an easier mind, though still with some vague fear floating in it. And so years went on, until the child was six. She was almost happy now, when suddenly the farmer's temper grew very bad.

For two or three years he seemed to have been nursing some secret anxiety, to be troubled by some care, some mental disturbance, which was gradually increasing. He remained sitting at table after dinner, with his head in his hands, sad and devoured by sorrow. He always spoke hastily, sometimes even brutally, and it even seemed as if he had a grudge against his wife, for at times he answered her roughly, almost angrily.

One day, when a neighbor's boy came for some eggs, and she spoke rather crossly to him, as she was very busy, her husband suddenly came in and said to her in his unpleasant voice: "If that were your own child you would not treat him so." She was hurt and did not reply, and then she went back into the house, with

all her grief awakened afresh; and at dinner the farmer neither spoke to her nor looked at her, and he seemed to hate her, to despise her, to know something about the affair at last. In consequence she lost her composure, and did not venture to remain alone with him after the meal was over, but left the room and hastened to the church.

It was getting dusk; the narrow nave was in total darkness, but she heard footsteps in the choir, for the sacristan was preparing the tabernacle lamp for the night. That spot of trembling light, which was lost in the darkness of the arches, looked to Rose like her last hope, and with her eyes fixed on it, she fell on her knees. The chain rattled as the little lamp swung up into the air, and almost immediately the small bell rang out the Angelus through the increasing mist. She went up to him, as he was going out.

"Is Monsieur le Curé at home?" she asked. "Of course he is; this is his dinner-time." She trembled as she rang the bell of the parsonage. The priest was just sitting down to dinner, and he made her sit down also. "Yes, yes, I know all about it; your husband has mentioned the matter to me that brings you here." The poor woman nearly fainted, and the priest continued: "What do you want, my child?" And he hastily swallowed several spoonfuls of soup, some of which dropped on to his greasy cassock. But Rose did not venture to say anything more, and she got up to go, but the priest said: "Courage."

And she went out and returned to the farm without knowing what she was doing. The farmer was waiting for her, as the laborers had gone away during her absence, and she fell heavily at his feet, and, shedding

a flood of tears, she said to him: "What have you got against me?"

He began to shout and to swear: "What have I got against you? That I have no children, by ——. When a man takes a wife it is not that they may live alone together to the end of their days. That is what I have against you. When a cow has no calves she is not worth anything, and when a woman has no children she is also not worth anything."

She began to cry, and said: "It is not my fault! It is not my fault!" He grew rather more gentle when he heard that, and added: "I do not say that it is, but it is very provoking, all the same."

PART V

From that day forward she had only one thought: to have a child, another child; she confided her wish to everybody, and, in consequence of this, a neighbor told her of an infallible method. This was, to make her husband drink a glass of water with a pinch of ashes in it every evening. The farmer consented to try it, but without success; so they said to each other: "Perhaps there are some secret ways?" And they tried to find out. They were told of a shepherd who lived ten leagues off, and so Vallin one day drove off to consult him. The shepherd gave him a loaf on which he had made some marks; it was kneaded up with herbs, and each of them was to eat a piece of it, but they ate the whole loaf without obtaining any results from it.

Next, a schoolmaster unveiled mysteries and processes of love which were unknown in the country, but infallible, so he declared; but none of them had the de-

sired effect. Then the priest advised them to make a pilgrimage to the shrine at Fécamp. Rose went with the crowd and prostrated herself in the abbey, and, mingling her prayers with the coarse desires of the peasants around her, she prayed that she might be fruitful a second time; but it was in vain, and then she thought that she was being punished for her first fault, and she was seized by terrible grief. She was wasting away with sorrow; her husband was also aging prematurely, and was wearing himself out in useless hopes.

Then war broke out between them; he called her names and beat her. They quarrelled all day long, and when they were in their room together at night he flung insults and obscenities at her, choking with rage, until one night, not being able to think of any means of making her suffer more, he ordered her to get up and go and stand out of doors in the rain until daylight. As she did not obey him, he seized her by the neck and began to strike her in the face with his fists, but she said nothing and did not move. In his exasperation he knelt on her stomach, and with clenched teeth, and mad with rage, he began to beat her. Then in her despair she rebelled, and flinging him against the wall with a furious gesture, she sat up, and in an altered voice she hissed: "I have had a child, I have had one! I had it by Jacques; you know Jacques. He promised to marry me, but he left this neighborhood without keeping his word."

The man was thunderstruck, and could hardly speak, but at last he stammered out: "What are you saying? What are you saying?" Then she began to sob, and amid her tears she continued: "That was the reason why I did not want to marry you. I could not tell you, for you would have left me without any bread

for my child. You have never had any children, so you cannot understand, you cannot understand!"

He said again, mechanically, with increasing surprise: "You have a child? You have a child?"

"You took me by force, as I suppose you know? I did not want to marry you," she said, still sobbing.

Then he got up, lit the candle, and began to walk up and down, with his arms behind him. She was cowering on the bed and crying, and suddenly he stopped in front of her, and said: "Then it is my fault that you have no children?" She gave him no answer, and he began to walk up and down again, and then, stopping again, he continued: "How old is your child?" "Just six," she whispered. "Why did you not tell me about it?" he asked. "How could I?" she replied, with a sigh.

He remained standing, motionless. "Come, get up," he said. She got up with some difficulty, and then, when she was standing on the floor, he suddenly began to laugh with the hearty laugh of his good days, and, seeing how surprised she was, he added: "Very well, we will go and fetch the child, as you and I can have none together."

She was so scared that if she had had the strength she would assuredly have run away, but the farmer rubbed his hands and said: "I wanted to adopt one, and now we have found one. I asked the curé about an orphan some time ago."

Then, still laughing, he kissed his weeping and agitated wife on both cheeks, and shouted out, as though she could not hear him: "Come along, mother, we will go and see whether there is any soup left; I should not mind a plateful."

She put on her petticoat and they went downstairs;

and while she was kneeling in front of the fireplace and lighting the fire under the saucepan, he continued to walk up and down the kitchen with long strides, repeating:

“Well, I am really glad of this; I am not saying it for form’s sake, but I am glad, I am really very glad.”

SIMON'S PAPA

NOON had just struck. The school door opened and the youngsters darted out, jostling each other in their haste to get out quickly. But instead of promptly dispersing and going home to dinner as usual, they stopped a few paces off, broke up into knots, and began whispering.

The fact was that, that morning, Simon, the son of La Blanchotte, had, for the first time, attended school.

They had all of them in their families heard talk of La Blanchotte; and, although in public she was welcome enough, the mothers among themselves treated her with a somewhat disdainful compassion, which the children had imitated without in the least knowing why.

As for Simon himself, they did not know him, for he never went out, and did not run about with them in the streets of the village, or along the banks of the river. And they did not care for him; so it was with a certain delight, mingled with considerable astonishment, that they met and repeated to each other what had been said by a lad of fourteen or fifteen who appeared to know all about it, so sagaciously did he wink. "You know—Simon—well, he has no papa."

Just then La Blanchotte's son appeared in the doorway of the school.

He was seven or eight years old, rather pale, very neat, with a timid and almost awkward manner.

He was starting home to his mother's house when the groups of his schoolmates, whispering and watching him

with the mischievous and heartless eyes of children bent upon playing a nasty trick, gradually closed in around him and ended by surrounding him altogether. There he stood in their midst, surprised and embarrassed, not understanding what they were going to do with him. But the lad who had brought the news, puffed up with the success he had met with already, demanded:

"What is your name, you?"

He answered: "Simon."

"Simon what?" retorted the other.

The child, altogether bewildered, repeated: "Simon."

The lad shouted at him: "One is named Simon something—that is not a name—Simon indeed."

The child, on the brink of tears, replied for the third time:

"My name is Simon."

The urchins began to laugh. The triumphant tormentor cried: "You can see plainly that he has no papa."

A deep silence ensued. The children were dumfounded by this extraordinary, impossible, monstrous thing—a boy who had not a papa; they looked upon him as a phenomenon, an unnatural being, and they felt that hitherto inexplicable contempt of their mothers for La Blanchotte growing upon them. As for Simon, he had leaned against a tree to avoid falling, and he remained as if prostrated by an irreparable disaster. He sought to explain, but could think of nothing to say to refute this horrible charge that he had no papa. At last he shouted at them quite recklessly: "Yes, I have one."

"Where is he?" demanded the boy.

Simon was silent, he did not know. The children roared, tremendously excited; and those country boys,

little more than animals, experienced that cruel craving which prompts the fowls of a farmyard to destroy one of their number as soon as it is wounded. Simon suddenly espied a little neighbor, the son of a widow, whom he had seen, as he himself was to be seen, always alone with his mother.

"And no more have you," he said; "no more have you a papa."

"Yes," replied the other, "I have one."

"Where is he?" rejoined Simon.

"He is dead," declared the brat, with superb dignity; "he is in the cemetery, is my papa."

A murmur of approval rose among the little wretches as if this fact of possessing a papa dead in a cemetery had caused their comrade to grow big enough to crush the other one who had no papa at all. And these boys, whose fathers were for the most part bad men, drunkards, thieves, and who beat their wives, jostled each other to press closer and closer, as though they, the legitimate ones, would smother by their pressure one who was illegitimate.

The boy who chanced to be next Simon suddenly put his tongue out at him with a mocking air and shouted at him:

"No papa! No papa!"

Simon seized him by the hair with both hands and set to work to disable his legs with kicks, while he bit his cheek ferociously. A tremendous struggle ensued between the two combatants, and Simon found himself beaten, torn, bruised, rolled on the ground in the midst of the ring of applauding schoolboys. As he arose, mechanically brushing with his hand his little blouse all covered with dust, some one shouted at him:

"Go and tell your papa."

Then he felt a great sinking at his heart. They were stronger than he was, they had beaten him, and he had no answer to give them, for he knew well that it was true that he had no papa. Full of pride, he attempted for some moments to struggle against the tears which were choking him. He had a feeling of suffocation, and then without any sound he commenced to weep, with great shaking sobs. A ferocious joy broke out among his enemies, and, with one accord, just like savages in their fearful festivals, they took each other by the hand and danced round him in a circle, repeating as a refrain:

"No papa! No papa!"

But suddenly Simon ceased sobbing. He became ferocious. There were stones under his feet; he picked them up and with all his strength hurled them at his tormentors. Two or three were struck and rushed off yelling, and so formidable did he appear that the rest became panic-stricken. Cowards, as the mob always is in presence of an exasperated man, they broke up and fled. Left alone, the little fellow without a father set off running toward the fields, for a recollection had been awakened in him which determined his soul to a great resolve. He made up his mind to drown himself in the river.

He remembered, in fact, that eight days before, a poor devil who begged for his livelihood had thrown himself into the water because he had no more money. Simon had been there when they fished him out again; and the wretched man, who usually seemed to him so miserable, and ugly, had then struck him as being so peaceful with his pale cheeks, his long drenched beard, and his open eyes full of calm. The bystanders had said:

"He is dead."

And some one had said:

"He is quite happy now."

And Simon wished to drown himself also, because he had no father, just like the wretched being who had no money.

He reached the water and watched it flowing. Some fish were sporting briskly in the clear stream and occasionally made a little bound and caught the flies flying on the surface. He stopped crying in order to watch them, for their maneuvers interested him greatly. But, at intervals, as in a tempest intervals of calm alternate suddenly with tremendous gusts of wind, which snap off the trees and then lose themselves in the horizon, this thought would return to him with intense pain:

"I am going to drown myself because I have no papa."

It was very warm, fine weather. The pleasant sunshine warmed the grass. The water shone like a mirror. And Simon enjoyed some minutes of happiness, of that languor which follows weeping, and felt inclined to fall asleep there upon the grass in the warm sunshine.

A little green frog leaped from under his feet. He endeavored to catch it. It escaped him. He followed it and lost it three times in succession. At last he caught it by one of its hind legs and began to laugh as he saw the efforts the creature made to escape. It gathered itself up on its hind legs and then with a violent spring suddenly stretched them out as stiff as two bars; while it beat the air with its front legs as though they were hands, its round eyes staring in their circle of yellow. It reminded him of a toy made of straight slips of wood nailed zigzag one on the other, which by a similar movement regulated the movements of the little

soldiers fastened thereon. Then he thought of his home, and then of his mother, and, overcome by sorrow, he again began to weep. A shiver passed over him. He knelt down and said his prayers as before going to bed. But he was unable to finish them, for tumultuous, violent sobs shook his whole frame. He no longer thought, he no longer saw anything round him, and was wholly absorbed in crying.

Suddenly a heavy hand was placed upon his shoulder, and a rough voice asked him:

"What is it that causes you so much grief, my little man?"

Simon turned round. A tall workman with a beard and black curly hair was staring at him good-naturedly. He answered with his eyes and throat full of tears:

"They beat me—because—I—I have no—papa—no papa."

"What!" said the man, smiling; "why, everybody has one."

The child answered painfully amid his spasms of grief:

"But I—I—I have none."

Then the workman became serious. He had recognized La Blanchotte's son, and, although himself a new arrival in the neighborhood, he had a vague idea of her history.

"Well," said he, "console yourself, my boy, and come with me home to your mother. They will give you—a papa."

And so they started on the way, the big fellow holding the little fellow by the hand, and the man smiled, for he was not sorry to see this Blanchotte, who was, it was said, one of the prettiest girls of the countryside, and, perhaps, he was saying to himself, at the

bottom of his heart, that a lass who had erred might very well err again.

They arrived in front of a very neat little white house.

"There it is," exclaimed the child, and he cried, "Mamma!"

A woman appeared, and the workman instantly left off smiling, for he saw at once that there was no fooling to be done with the tall pale girl who stood austere at her door as though to defend from one man the threshold of that house where she had already been betrayed by another. Intimidated, his cap in his hand, he stammered out:

"See, madame, I have brought you back your little boy who had lost himself near the river."

But Simon flung his arms about his mother's neck and told her, as he again began to cry:

"No, mamma, I wished to drown myself, because the others had beaten me—had beaten me—because I have no papa."

A burning redness covered the young woman's cheeks; and, hurt to the quick, she embraced her child passionately, while the tears coursed down her face. The man, much moved, stood there, not knowing how to get away. But Simon suddenly ran to him and said:

"Will you be my papa?"

A deep silence ensued. La Blanchotte, dumb and tortured with shame, leaned herself against the wall, both her hands upon her heart. The child, seeing that no answer was made him, replied:

"If you will not, I shall go back and drown myself."

The workman took the matter as a jest and answered, laughing:

"Why, yes, certainly I will."

"What is your name," went on the child, "so that I

may tell the others when they wish to know your name?"

"Philip," answered the man.

Simon was silent a moment so that he might get the name well into his head; then he stretched out his arms, quite consoled, as he said:

"Well, then, Philip, you are my papa."

The workman, lifting him from the ground, kissed him hastily on both cheeks, and then walked away very quickly with great strides.

When the child returned to school next day he was received with a spiteful laugh, and at the end of school, when the lads were on the point of recommencing, Simon threw these words at their heads as he would have done a stone: "He is named Philip, my papa."

Yells of delight burst out from all sides.

"Philip who? Philip what? What on earth is Philip? Where did you pick up your Philip?"

Simon answered nothing; and, immovable in his faith, he defied them with his eye, ready to be martyred rather than fly before them. The school master came to his rescue and he returned home to his mother.

During three months, the tall workman, Philip, frequently passed by La Blanchotte's house, and sometimes he made bold to speak to her when he saw her sewing near the window. She answered him civilly, always sedately, never joking with him, nor permitting him to enter her house. Notwithstanding, being, like all men, a bit of a coxcomb, he imagined that she was often rosier than usual when she chatted with him.

But a lost reputation is so difficult to regain and always remains so fragile that, in spite of the shy reserve of La Blanchotte, they already gossiped in the neighborhood.

As for Simon, he loved his new papa very much, and walked with him nearly every evening when the day's work was done. He went regularly to school, and mixed with great 'dignity with his schoolfellows without ever answering them back.

One day, however, the lad who had first attacked him said to him:

"You have lied. You have not a papa named Philip."

"Why do you say that?" demanded Simon, much disturbed.

The youth rubbed his hands. He replied:

"Because if you had one he would be your mamma's husband."

Simon was confused by the truth of this reasoning; nevertheless, he retorted:

"He is my papa, all the same."

"That can very well be," exclaimed the urchin with a sneer, "but that is not being your papa altogether."

La Blanchotte's little one bowed his head and went off dreaming in the direction of the forge belonging to old Loizon, where Philip worked.

This forge was as though buried beneath trees. It was very dark there; the red glare of a formidable furnace alone lit up with great flashes five blacksmiths, who hammered upon their anvils with a terrible din. They were standing enveloped in flame, like demons, their eyes fixed on the red-hot iron they were pounding; and their dull ideas rose and fell with their hammers.

Simon entered without being noticed, and went quietly to pluck his friend by the sleeve. The latter turned round. All at once the work came to a standstill, and all the men looked on, very attentive. Then, in the

midst of this unaccustomed silence, rose the slender pipe of Simon:

"Say, Philip, the Michau de boy told me just now that you were not altogether my papa."

"Why not?" asked the blacksmith.

The child replied with all innocence:

"Because you are not my mamma's husband."

No one laughed. Philip remained standing, leaning his forehead upon the back of his great hands, which supported the handle of his hammer standing upright upon the anvil. He mused. His four companions watched him, and Simon, a tiny mite among these giants, anxiously waited. Suddenly, one of the smiths, answering to the sentiment of all, said to Philip:

"La Blanchotte is a good, honest girl, and upright and steady in spite of her misfortune, and would make a worthy wife for an honest man."

"That is true," remarked the three others.

The smith continued:

"Is it the girl's fault if she went wrong? She had been promised marriage; and I know more than one who is much respected to-day, and who sinned every bit as much."

"That is true," responded the three men in chorus.

He resumed:

"How hard she has toiled, poor thing, to bring up her child all alone, and how she has wept all these years; she has never gone out except to church, God only knows."

"This is also true," said the others.

Then nothing was heard but the bellows which fanned the fire of the furnace. Philip hastily bent himself down to Simon:

"Go and tell your mother that I am coming to speak to her this evening."

Then he pushed the child out by the shoulders. He returned to his work, and with a single blow the five hammers again fell upon their anvils. Thus they wrought the iron until nightfall, strong, powerful, happy, like contented hammers. But just as the great bell of a cathedral resounds upon feast days above the jingling of the other bells, so Philip's hammer, sounding above the rest, clanged second after second with a deafening uproar. And he stood amid the flying sparks plying his trade vigorously.

The sky was full of stars as he knocked at La Blanchotte's door. He had on his Sunday blouse, a clean shirt, and his beard was trimmed. The young woman showed herself upon the threshold, and said in a grieved tone:

"It is ill to come thus when night has fallen, Mr. Philip."

He wished to answer, but stammered and stood confused before her.

She resumed:

"You understand, do you not, that it will not do for me to be talked about again?"

"What does that matter to me, if you will be my wife!"

No voice replied to him, but he believed that he heard in the shadow of the room the sound of a falling body. He entered quickly; and Simon, who had gone to bed, distinguished the sound of a kiss and some words that his mother murmured softly. Then, all at once, he found himself lifted up by the hands of his friend, who, holding him at the length of his herculean arms, exclaimed:

"You will tell them, your schoolmates, that your papa is Philip Remy, the blacksmith, and that he will pull the ears of all who do you any harm."

On the morrow, when the school was full and lessons were about to begin, little Simon stood up, quite pale with trembling lips:

"My papa," said he in a clear voice, "is Philip Remy, the blacksmith, and he has promised to pull the ears of all who does me any harm."

This time no one laughed, for he was very well known, was Philip Remy, the blacksmith, and was a papa of whom any one in the world would have been proud.

A COWARD

IN society he was called "Handsome Signoles." His name was Vicomte Gontran-Joseph de Signoles.

An orphan, and possessed of an ample fortune, he cut quite a dash, as it is called. He had an attractive appearance and manner, could talk well, had a certain in-born elegance, an air of pride and nobility, a good mustache, and a tender eye, that always finds favor with women.

He was in great request at receptions, waltzed to perfection, and was regarded by his own sex with that smiling hostility accorded to the popular society man. He had been suspected of more than one love affair, calculated to enhance the reputation of a bachelor. He lived a happy, peaceful life—a life of physical and mental well-being. He had won considerable fame as a swordsman, and still more as a marksman.

"When the time comes for me to fight a duel," he said, "I shall choose pistols. With such a weapon I am sure to kill my man."

One evening, having accompanied two women friends of his with their husbands to the theatre, he invited them to take some ice cream at Tortoni's after the performance. They had been seated a few minutes in the restaurant when Signoles noticed that a man was staring persistently at one of the ladies. She seemed annoyed and lowered her eyes. At last she said to her husband:

"There's a man over there looking at me. I don't know him; do you?"

The husband, who had noticed nothing, glanced across at the offender, and said:

"No; not in the least."

His wife continued, half smiling, half angry:

"It's very tiresome! He quite spoils my ice cream."

The husband shrugged his shoulders.

"Nonsense! Don't take any notice of him. If we were to bother our heads about all the ill-mannered people we should have no time for anything else."

But the vicomte abruptly left his seat. He could not allow this insolent fellow to spoil an ice for a guest of his. It was for him to take cognizance of the offence, since it was through him that his friends had come to the restaurant. He went across to the man and said:

"Sir, you are staring at those ladies in a manner I cannot permit. I must ask you to desist from your rudeness."

The other replied:

"Let me alone, will you!"

"Take care, sir," said the vicomte between his teeth, "or you will force me to extreme measures."

The man replied with a single word—a foul word, which could be heard from one end of the restaurant to the other, and which startled every one there. All those whose backs were toward the two disputants turned round; all the others raised their heads; three waiters spun round on their heels like tops; the two lady cashiers jumped, as if shot, then turned their bodies simultaneously, like two automata worked by the same spring.

There was dead silence. Then suddenly a sharp, crisp sound. The vicomte had slapped his adversary's face. Every one rose to interfere. Cards were exchanged.

When the vicomte reached home he walked rapidly

up and down his room for some minutes. He was in a state of too great agitation to think connectedly. One idea alone possessed him: a duel. But this idea aroused in him as yet no emotion of any kind. He had done what he was bound to do; he had proved himself to be what he ought to be. He would be talked about, approved, congratulated. He repeated aloud, speaking as one does when under the stress of great mental disturbance:

“What a brute of a man!”

Then he sat down, and began to reflect. He would have to find seconds as soon as morning came. Whom should he choose? He bethought himself of the most influential and best-known men of his acquaintance. His choice fell at last on the Marquis de la Tour-Noire and Colonel Bourdin—a nobleman and a soldier. That would be just the thing. Their names would carry weight in the newspapers. He was thirsty, and drank three glasses of water, one after another; then he walked up and down again. If he showed himself brave, determined, prepared to face a duel in deadly earnest, his adversary would probably draw back and proffer excuses.

He picked up the card he had taken from his pocket and thrown on a table. He read it again, as he had already read it, first at a glance in the restaurant, and afterward on the way home in the light of each gas lamp: “Georges Lamil, 51 Rue Moncey.” That was all.

He examined closely this collection of letters, which seemed to him mysterious, fraught with many meanings. Georges Lamil! Who was the man? What was his profession? Why had he stared so at the woman? Was it not monstrous that a stranger, an unknown, should thus all at once upset one’s whole life, simply because it

had pleased him to stare rudely at a woman? And the vicomte once more repeated aloud:

"What a brute!"

Then he stood motionless, thinking, his eyes still fixed on the card. Anger rose in his heart against this scrap of paper—a resentful anger, mingled with a strange sense of uneasiness. It was a stupid business altogether! He took up a penknife which lay open within reach, and deliberately stuck it into the middle of the printed name, as if he were stabbing some one.

So he would have to fight! Should he choose swords or pistols?—for he considered himself as the insulted party. With the sword he would risk less, but with the pistol there was some chance of his adversary backing out. A duel with swords is rarely fatal, since mutual prudence prevents the combatants from fighting close enough to each other for a point to enter very deep. With pistols he would seriously risk his life; but, on the other hand, he might come out of the affair with flying colors, and without a duel, after all.

"I must be firm," he said. "The fellow will be afraid."

The sound of his own voice startled him, and he looked nervously round the room. He felt unstrung. He drank another glass of water, and then began undressing, preparatory to going to bed.

As soon as he was in bed he blew out the light and shut his eyes.

"I have all day to-morrow," he reflected, "for setting my affairs in order. I must sleep now, in order to be calm when the time comes."

He was very warm in bed, but he could not succeed in losing consciousness. He tossed and turned, remained

for five minutes lying on his back, then changed to his left side, then rolled over to his right.

He was thirsty again, and rose to drink. Then a qualm seized him:

"Can it be possible that I am afraid?"

Why did his heart beat so uncontrollably at every well-known sound in his room? When the clock was about to strike, the prefatory grating of its spring made him start, and for several seconds he panted for breath, so unnerved was he.

He began to reason with himself on the possibility of such a thing:

"Could I by any chance be afraid?"

No, indeed; he could not be afraid, since he was resolved to proceed to the last extremity, since he was irrevocably determined to fight without flinching. And yet he was so perturbed in mind and body that he asked himself:

"Is it possible to be afraid in spite of one's self?"

And this doubt, this fearful question, took possession of him. If an irresistible power, stronger than his own will, were to quell his courage, what would happen? He would certainly go to the place appointed; his will would force him that far. But supposing, when there, he were to tremble or faint? And he thought of his social standing, his reputation, his name.

And he suddenly determined to get up and look at himself in the glass. He lighted his candle. When he saw his face reflected in the mirror he scarcely recognized it. He seemed to see before him a man whom he did not know. His eyes looked disproportionately large, and he was very pale.

He remained standing before the mirror. He put out

his tongue, as if to examine the state of his health, and all at once the thought flashed into his mind:

"At this time the day after to-morrow I may be dead."

And his heart throbbed painfully.

"At this time the day after to-morrow I may be dead. This person in front of me, this 'I' whom I see in the glass, will perhaps be no more. What! Here I am, I look at myself, I feel myself to be alive—and yet in twenty-four hours I may be lying on that bed, with closed eyes, dead, cold, inanimate."

He turned round, and could see himself distinctly lying on his back on the couch he had just quitted. He had the hollow face and the limp hands of death.

Then he became afraid of his bed, and to avoid seeing it went to his smoking-room. He mechanically took a cigar, lighted it, and began walking back and forth. He was cold; he took a step toward the bell, to wake his valet, but stopped with hand raised toward the bell rope.

"He would see that I am afraid!"

And, instead of ringing, he made a fire himself. His hands quivered nervously as they touched various objects. His head grew dizzy, his thoughts confused, disjointed, painful; a numbness seized his spirit, as if he had been drinking.

And all the time he kept on saying:

"What shall I do? What will become of me?"

His whole body trembled spasmodically; he rose, and, going to the window, drew back the curtains.

The day—a summer day—was breaking. The pink sky cast a glow on the city, its roofs, and its walls. A flush of light enveloped the awakened world, like a caress from the rising sun, and the glimmer of dawn kindled new hope in the breast of the vicomte. What a fool he

was to let himself succumb to fear before anything was decided—before his seconds had interviewed those of Georges Lamil, before he even knew whether he would have to fight or not!

He bathed, dressed, and left the house with a firm step.

He repeated as he went:

"I must be firm—very firm. I must show that I am not afraid."

His seconds, the marquis and the colonel, placed themselves at his disposal, and, having shaken him warmly by the hand, began to discuss details.

"You want a serious duel?" asked the colonel.

"Yes—quite serious," replied the vicomte.

"You insist on pistols?" put in the marquis.

"Yes."

"Do you leave all the other arrangements in our hands?"

With a dry, jerky voice the vicomte answered:

"Twenty paces—at a given signal—the arm to be raised, not lowered—shots to be exchanged until one or other is seriously wounded."

"Excellent conditions," declared the colonel in a satisfied tone. "You are a good shot; all the chances are in your favor."

And they parted. The vicomte returned home to wait for them. His agitation, only temporarily allayed, now increased momentarily. He felt, in arms, legs and chest, a sort of trembling—a continuous vibration; he could not stay still, either sitting or standing. His mouth was parched, and he made every now and then a clicking movement of the tongue, as if to detach it from his palate.

He attempted to take luncheon, but could not eat.

Then it occurred to him to seek courage in drink, and he sent for a decanter of rum, of which he swallowed, one after another, six small glasses.

A burning warmth, followed by a deadening of the mental faculties, ensued. He said to himself:

"I know how to manage. Now it will be all right!"

But at the end of an hour he had emptied the decanter, and his agitation was worse than ever. A mad longing possessed him to throw himself on the ground, to bite, to scream. Night fell.

A ring at the bell so unnerved him that he had not the strength to rise to receive his seconds.

He dared not even to speak to them, wish them good-day, utter a single word, lest his changed voice should betray him.

"All is arranged as you wished," said the colonel. "Your adversary claimed at first the privileges of the offended party; but he yielded almost at once, and accepted your conditions. His seconds are two military men."

"Thank you," said the vicomte.

The marquis added:

"Please excuse us if we do not stay now, for we have a good deal to see to yet. We shall want a reliable doctor, since the duel is not to end until a serious wound has been inflicted; and you know that bullets are not to be trifled with. We must select a spot near some house to which the wounded party can be carried if necessary. In fact, the arrangements will take us another two or three hours at least."

The vicomte articulated for the second time:

"Thank you."

"You're all right?" asked the colonel. "Quite calm?"

"Perfectly calm, thank you."

The two men withdrew.

When he was once more alone he felt as though he should go mad. His servant having lighted the lamps, he sat down at his table to write some letters. When he had traced at the top of a sheet of paper the words: "This is my last will and testament," he started from his seat, feeling himself incapable of connected thought, of decision in regard to anything.

So he was going to fight! He could no longer avoid it. What, then, possessed him? He wished to fight, he was fully determined to fight, and yet, in spite of all his mental effort, in spite of the exertion of all his will power, he felt that he could not even preserve the strength necessary to carry him through the ordeal. He tried to conjure up a picture of the duel, his own attitude, and that of his enemy.

Every now and then his teeth chattered audibly. He thought he would read, and took down Châteauevillard's *Rules of Duelling*. Then he said:

"Is the other man practiced in the use of the pistol? Is he well known? How can I find out?"

He remembered Baron de Vaux's book on marksmen, and searched it from end to end. Georges Lamil was not mentioned. And yet, if he were not an adept, would he have accepted without demur such a dangerous weapon and such deadly conditions?

He opened a case of Gastinne Renettes which stood on a small table, and took from it a pistol. Next he stood in the correct attitude for firing, and raised his arm. But he was trembling from head to foot, and the weapon shook in his grasp.

Then he said to himself:

"It is impossible. I cannot fight like this."

He looked at the little black, death-spitting hole at the

end of the pistol; he thought of dishonor, of the whispers at the clubs, the smiles in his friends' drawing-rooms, the contempt of women, the veiled sneers of the newspapers, the insults that would be hurled at him by cowards.

He still looked at the weapon, and raising the hammer, saw the glitter of the priming below it. The pistol had been left loaded by some chance, some oversight. And the discovery rejoiced him, he knew not why.

If he did not maintain, in presence of his opponent, the steadfast bearing which was so necessary to his honor, he would be ruined forever. He would be branded, stigmatized as a coward, hounded out of society! And he felt, he knew, that he could not maintain that calm, unmoved demeanor. And yet he was brave, since—the thought that followed was not even rounded to a finish in his mind; but, opening his mouth wide, he suddenly plunged the barrel of the pistol as far back as his throat, and pressed the trigger.

When the valet, alarmed at the report, rushed into the room he found his master lying dead upon his back. A spurt of blood had splashed the white paper on the table, and had made a great crimson stain beneath the words:

“This is my last will and testament.”

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CORVO, FREDERICK BARON

CRANE, STEPHEN

CUMMINGS, E. E.

DANTE

DAUDET, ALPHONSE

DEFOE, DANIEL

The Education of Henry Adams 76
A Comprehensive Anthology of

American Verse 101

Modern American Poetry 127

Winesburg, Ohio 104

Droll Stories 193

Zuleika Dobson 116

My War with the United States 175

The Old Wives' Tale 184

In the Midst of Life 133

The Decameron 71

Jane Eyre 64

Wuthering Heights 106

The Good Earth 2

The Arabian Nights 201

Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited 136

The Way of All Flesh 13

Jurgen 15

God's Little Acre 51

The Deepening Stream 200

Alice in Wonderland, etc. 79

Memoirs of Casanova 165

Autobiography of Cellini 3

Don Quixote 174

The Canterbury Tales 161

Troilus and Cressida 126

The Wisdom of Confucius 7

Heart of Darkness

(In Great Modern Short Stories 168)

Lord Jim 186

Victory 34

Six Plays of Corneille and Racine 194

A History of the Borgias 192

The Red Badge of Courage 130

The Enormous Room 214

The Divine Comedy 208

Sapho 85

Moll Flanders 122

- DEWEY, JOHN
 DICKENS, CHARLES
 DICKENS, CHARLES
 DICKENS, CHARLES
 DINESEN, ISAK
 DOS PASSOS, JOHN
 DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 DOUGLAS, NORMAN
 DREISER, THEODORE
 DUMAS, ALEXANDRE
 DUMAS, ALEXANDRE
 DU MAURIER, GEORGE
 EDMAN, IRWIN
 EDMONDS, WALTER D.
 ELLIS, HAVELOCK
 EMERSON, RALPH WALDO
 FAULKNER, WILLIAM
 FEUCHTWANGER, LION
 FIELDING, HENRY
 FIELDING, HENRY
 FLAUBERT, GUSTAVE
 FORESTER, C. S.
 FORSTER, E. M.
 FRANCE, ANATOLE
 FRANCE, ANATOLE
 FRANKLIN, BENJAMIN
 GALSWORTHY, JOHN
 GAUTIER, THEOPHILE
 GEORGE, HENRY
 GIDE, ANDRÉ
 GISSING, GEORGE
 GISSING, GEORGE
 GLASGOW, ELLEN
 GOETHE
 GOETHE
 GOGOL, NIKOLAI
 GRAVES, ROBERT
 HAMMETT, DASHIELL
 HAMSUN, KNUT
 HARDY, THOMAS
 HARDY, THOMAS
 HARDY, THOMAS
 HARDY, THOMAS
 HART, LIDDELL
 HAWTHORNE, NATHANIEL
 HELLMAN, LILLIAN
 Human Nature and Conduct 173
 A Tale of Two Cities 189
 David Copperfield 110
 Pickwick Papers 204
 Seven Gothic Tales 54
 Three Soldiers 205
 Crime and Punishment 199
 The Brothers Karamazov 151
 The Possessed 55
 South Wind 5
 Sister Carrie 8
 Camille 69
 The Three Musketeers 143
 Peter Ibbetson 207
 The Philosophy of Plato 181
 Rome Haul 191
 The Dance of Life 160
 Essays and Other Writings 91
 Sanctuary 61
 Power 206
 Joseph Andrews 117
 Tom Jones 185
 Madame Bovary 28
 The African Queen 102
 A Passage to India 218
 Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard 22
 Penguin Island 210
 Autobiography, etc. 39
 The Apple Tree
 (In Great Modern Short Stories 168)
 Mlle. De Maupin,
 One of Cleopatra's Nights 53
 Progress and Poverty 36
 The Counterfeiters 187
 New Grub Street 125
 Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft 46
 Barren Ground 25
 Faust 177
 The Sorrows of Werther
 (In Collected German Stories 108)
 Dead Souls 40
 I, Claudius 20
 The Maltese Falcon 45
 Growth of the Soil 12
 Jude the Obscure 135
 The Mayor of Casterbridge 17
 The Return of the Native 121
 Tess of the D'Urbervilles 72
 The War in Outline 16
 The Scarlet Letter 93
 Four Plays by 223

- HEMINGWAY, ERNEST
 HEMINGWAY, ERNEST
 HEMON, LOUIS
 HOMER
 HOMER
 HORACE
 HUDSON, W. H.
 HUDSON, W. H.
 HUGHES, RICHARD
 HUGO, VICTOR
 HUNEKER, JAMES G.
 HUXLEY, ALDOUS
 HUXLEY, ALDOUS
 IBSEN, HENRIK
 JAMES, HENRY
 JAMES, HENRY
 JAMES, WILLIAM
 JAMES, WILLIAM
 JEFFERS, ROBINSON

 JOYCE, JAMES
 JOYCE, JAMES

 KUPRIN, ALEXANDRE
 LARDNER, RING
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LEWIS, SINCLAIR
 LEWIS, SINCLAIR
 LEWISOHN, LUDWIG
 LONGFELLOW, HENRY W.
 LOUYS, PIERRE
 LUDWIG, EMIL
 MACHIAVELLI

 MALRAUX, ANDRÉ
 MANN, THOMAS

 MANSFIELD, KATHERINE
 MARQUAND, JOHN P.
 MARX, KARL
 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET
 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET
 MAUPASSANT, GUY DE
 McFEE, WILLIAM
 MELVILLE, HERMAN
 MEREDITH, GEORGE
 MEREDITH, GEORGE
 MEREJKOWSKI, DMITRI
 MISCELLANEOUS

 A Farewell to Arms 19
 The Sun Also Rises 170
 Maria Chapdelaine 10
 The Iliad 166
 The Odyssey 167
 The Complete Works of 141
 Green Mansions 89
 The Purple Land 24
 A High Wind in Jamaica 112
 The Hunchback of Notre Dame 35
 Painted Veils 43
 Antic Hay 209
 Point Counter Point 180
 A Doll's House, Ghosts, etc. 6
 The Portrait of a Lady 107
 The Turn of the Screw 169
 The Philosophy of William James 114
 The Varieties of Religious Experience 70
 Roan Stallion; Tamar and Other
 Poems 118
 Dubliners 124
 A Portrait of the Artist as a Young
 Man 145
 Yama 203
 The Collected Short Stories of 211
 The Rainbow 128
 Sons and Lovers 109
 Women in Love 68
 Arrowsmith 42
 Babbitt 162
 The Island Within 123
 Poems 56
 Aphrodite 77
 Napoleon 95
 The Prince and The Discourses of
 Machiavelli 65
 Man's Fate 33
 Death in Venice
 (In Collected German Stories 108)
 The Garden Party 129
 The Late George Apley 182
 Capital and Other Writings 202
 Of Human Bondage 176
 The Moon and Sixpence 27
 Best Short Stories 98
 Casuals of the Sea 195
 Moby Dick 119
 Diana of the Crossways 14
 The Ordeal of Richard Feverel 134
 The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci 138
 An Anthology of American Negro
 Literature 163
 An Anthology of Light Verse 48
 Best Ghost Stories 73

MISCELLANEOUS (Cont.)

MOLIERE

MORLEY, CHRISTOPHER

MORLEY, CHRISTOPHER

NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH

NOSTRADAMUS

ODETS, CLIFFORD

O'NEILL, EUGENE

D'NEILL, EUGENE

PASCAL, BLAISE

PATER, WALTER

PATER, WALTER

PEARSON, EDMUND

PEPYS, SAMUEL

PETRONIUS ARBITER

PLATO

PLATO

POE, EDGAR ALLAN

POLO, MARCO

PORTER, KATHERINE ANNE

PREVOST, ANTOINE

PROUST, MARCEL

PROUST, MARCEL

PROUST, MARCEL

PROUST, MARCEL

PROUST, MARCEL

RABELAIS

READE, CHARLES

REED, JOHN

RENAN, ERNEST

ROSTAND, EDMOND

RUSSELL, BERTRAND

SAROYAN, WILLIAM

Best Amer. Humorous Short Stories 87
Best Russian Short Stories, including
Bunin's *The Gentleman from San*
Francisco 18

Eight Famous Elizabethan Plays 94

Five Great Modern Irish Plays 30

Four Famous Greek Plays 158

Fourteen Great Detective Stories 144

Great German Short Novels and
Stories 108

Great Modern Short Stories 168

The Federalist 139

The Making of Man: An Outline of
Anthropology 149

The Making of Society: An Outline of
Sociology 183

The Short Bible 57

Outline of Abnormal Psychology 152

Outline of Psychoanalysis 66

The Sex Problem in Modern Society 198
Plays 78

Human Being 74

Parnassus on Wheels 190

Thus Spake Zarathustra 9

Oracles of 81

Six Plays of 67

The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie and
The Hairy Ape 146

The Long Voyage Home and Seven
Plays of the Sea 111

Pensées and The Provincial Letters 164

The Renaissance 86

Marius the Epicurean 90

Studies in Murder 113

Samuel Pepys' Diary 103

The Satyricon 156

The Republic 153

The Philosophy of Plato 181

Best Tales 82

The Travels of Marco Polo 196

Flowering Judas 88

Manon Lescaut 85

Cities of the Plain 220

The Captive 120

The Guermantes Way 213

Swann's Way 59

Within a Budding Grove 172

Gargantua and Pantagruel 4

The Cloister and the Hearth 62

Ten Days that Shook the World 215

The Life of Jesus 140

Cyrano de Bergerac 154

Selected Papers of Bertrand Russell 137

The Daring Young Man on the Flying
Trapeze 92

- SCHOPENHAUER
 SCHREINER, OLIVE
 SHEEAN, VINCENT
 SMOLLETT, TOBIAS
 SPINOZA
 STEINBECK, JOHN
 STEINBECK, JOHN
 STEINBECK, JOHN
 STEINBECK, JOHN
 STENDHAL
 STENDHAL
 STERNE, LAURENCE
 STOKER, BRAM
 STONE, IRVING
 STRACHEY, LYTTON
 SUETONIUS
 SWIFT, JONATHAN

 SWINBURNE, CHARLES
 SYMONDS, JOHN A.
 TACITUS
 TCHEKOV, ANTON
 TCHEKOV, ANTON

 THACKERAY, WILLIAM
 THACKERAY, WILLIAM
 THOMPSON, FRANCIS
 THOREAU, HENRY DAVID
 THUCYDIDES
 TOLSTOY, LEO
 TOMLINSON, H. M.
 TROLLOPE, ANTHONY
 TURGENEV, IVAN
 VAN LOON, HENDRIK W.
 VEBLEN, THORSTEIN
 VIRGIL'S WORKS

 VOLTAIRE
 WALPOLE, HUGH
 WALTON, IZAAK
 WEBB, MARY
 WELLS, H. G.
 WHITMAN, WALT
 WILDE, OSCAR
 WILDE, OSCAR
 WILDE, OSCAR
 WOOLF, VIRGINIA
 WOOLF, VIRGINIA
 WRIGHT, RICHARD
 YEATS, W. B.
 YOUNG, G. F.
 ZOLA, EMILE
 ZWEIG, STEFAN

 The Philosophy of Schopenhauer 52
 The Story of an African Farm 132
 Personal History 32
 Humphry Clinker 159
 The Philosophy of Spinoza 60
 In Dubious Battle 115
 The Grapes of Wrath 148
 Tortilla Flat 216
 Of Mice and Men 29
 The Charterhouse of Parma 150
 The Red and the Black 157
 Tristram Shandy 147
 Dracula 31
 Lust for Life 11
 Eminent Victorians 212
 Lives of the Twelve Caesars 188
 Gulliver's Travels, A Tale of a Tub, The
 Battle of the Books 100
 Poems 23
 The Life of Michelangelo 49
 The Complete Works of 222
 Short Stories 50
 Sea Gull, Cherry Orchard, Three Sis-
 ters, etc. 171
 Henry Esmond 80
 Vanity Fair 131
 Complete Poems 38
 Walden and Other Writings 155
 The Complete Writings of 58
 Anna Karenina 37
 The Sea and the Jungle 99
 Barchester Towers and The Warden 41
 Fathers and Sons 21
 Ancient Man 105
 The Theory of the Leisure Class 63
 Including The Aeneid, Eclogues, and
 Georgics 75
 Candide 47
 Fortitude 178
 The Compleat Angler 26
 Precious Bane 219
 Tono Bungay 197
 Leaves of Grass 97
 Dorian Gray, De Profundis 1
 The Plays of Oscar Wilde 83
 Poems and Fairy Tales 84
 Mrs. Dalloway 96
 To the Lighthouse 217
 Native Son 221
 Irish Fairy and Folk Tales 44
 The Medici 179
 Nana 142
 Amok (In Collected German Stories 108)

